THE REASONABLENESS OF THE RELIGION OF JESUS

BY WILLIAM STEPHEN RAINSFORD

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BY

WILLIAM STEPHEN RAINSFORD, D.D.

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge
1913

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Published February 1913

NOTE

THE substance of this volume was first used as the Baldwin Lectures for 1911 at the University of Michigan, under the Baldwin Lectureship for the Establishment and Defense of Christian Truth.

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INTRODUCTION

I HAD the honor of knowing Mr. Baldwin, the founder of this lectureship. The first object he had in mind was to aid the religious life of the students of this university; and it is because I hope to be of some small service to you, young men and women, and not because I have any hope of adding a worthy volume to the valuable apologetic library which this lectureship is, I doubt not, destined in time to produce, that I, with much hesitation, ventured to accept the nomination that the Bishop of the diocese did me the honor to make.

I never was a scholar. I have read somewhat widely. I have seen more of the world, and of the men and women in it, than most clergymen. But such powers of memory as I possessed, always poor, have suffered greatly in latter years, owing to excessive strain and ill health. Thus you see I am unusually poorly

furnished to fill the office of a "learned" lecturer.

Why, then, do I accept? I do so because, while I have no capacity to aid the scholar, I hope still to be of some service to those who, as they are entering on life's more thoughtful stage, find, as I did myself many years ago, the foundations on which youth's rather light-hearted religious structure had been hastily builded, crumbling away beneath their feet. The clearest-eyed among us sees but dimly through life's dark glasses; but dim as these eyes must be, to those who steadily seek for light, gleams do now and then break through upon our stormy sea. Moments of what we must deem "insight" are given us, when all things around and within us are less opaque. When we travellers, stumbling along life's hard pathway, are sure that we see a light, — no wide-shining illumination, no Bethlehem star even, once again with steady ray pointing to the manger where wisdom learned to worship babyhood, but still a light wide enough and clear enough to help us to

order our steps aright — when such visitations come true, then do we rise and gird up our loins. New hope, and purpose, and courage, are ours. We speak to our fellow travellers to cheer them, or we even sing, as I have heard tired soldiers sing, as they made long march in the night.

Well, not to wander too aimlessly and too long, I have had such experiences. I have seen the "gleam" and stumblingly have tried to rise and follow it, and of such times and efforts I have tried to find some record. I will try to recall what I saw and felt, in the hope that it may be of some service to you, who soon are setting out on the larger, freer life awaiting those whose college days are over.

In my lectures to you I purpose going over old ground. Dealing with old questions which are ever the newest questions of all, — questions that down here, in the shadows and mists of this world life, can never receive a full or satisfactory answer. Yet since each man and woman of us all must, in his heart of hearts, make some sort of tentative answer

to them, must give some reason to his own soul for the faith or non-faith that is in him, I venture to offer you the poor best that is mine.

I was brought up to believe that on those tremendous doctrines which are commonly known as the fundamentals of our religion, all should entertain a certainty, should at least rejoice in a "sure and certain hope." I cannot claim to have won any such faith. Such hope as I have is far removed from certainty. Nor do I find, among my fellow pilgrims of the road, that their assurances are generally of a higher order than my own.

When we can succeed in breaking through those conventions that so effectively muffle the voices of our hearts, when we try to say to each other what we really feel, — really mean, — at such times Emerson's statement of our human limitations fits us one and all: —

> He by false usage pinned about
> No breath within, no passage out,
> Cast wishful glances at the stars,
> And wishful saw the ocean stream: —

"Merge me in the brute universe,
Or lift to a diviner dream!"

The divine within us makes surrender to the brute an ultimate torture. The brute within us plucks the pinion feather from our souls' wings as they seek to bear us above the steaming flats and valleys of sense.

Sometimes we are sure our feet are on the king's highway, and the first thing we know we find ourselves fast by the heels in Doubting Castle, and all view of the Delectable Mountains by the dark enclosing walls cut off.

Such is the experience of the majority of men who are thoughtful, and who try to do right. Such has been my experience, at any rate, and as I speak to you, I shall at least try not to profess an order of faith I do not enjoy, or an assurance I do not possess. I shall try to say what I feel and believe, and no more. For I have noticed that few things are more hurtful to the cause of real religion today than the habit of exaggeration into which good people sometimes fall as they seek to aid

the faith of others by grossly overstating their own.

When circumstances arose which made the apostles of old look fearfully toward an uncertain and dangerous future, their spokesman cried, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." Sure it is that the intervening ages have given no response to that query — if Jesus cannot help us, no one else can. It is a matter of history that Jesus did most wonderfully inspire those men. It is a matter of fact that he can and does comfort, guide, and inspire those who seek him to-day. Of this much I am sure. I believe it with all my heart. I have seen it proved, again and again, in the lives of many people I have been privileged to know intimately.

So I beg you to come with me and see if duty's path may not grow plainer to you, and your life's burden lighter, as you try to set your will to understand and accept his reasonable service.

W. S. Rainsford.

THE REASONABLENESS OF THE RELIGION OF JESUS

THE REASONABLENESS OF THE RELIGION OF JESUS

I

THE REASONABLENESS AND NECESSITY OF GROWTH AND CHANGE IN RELIGION

In my trouble I have prepared for the house of the Lord an hundred thousand talents of gold; . . . thou mayest add thereto. — 1 Chron. xxii, 14.

David is delivering his dying charge to Solomon his son. David may be considered the founder of the Israelitish kingdom. Perhaps it is no unfair historic analogy to call him the King Alfred of the Jews. The qualities that have gone to make that imperishable race great were embodied in David, its first great king. Great were David's services to the weak people he championed and led. It is not too much to say that, if he did not make them a nation, he saved the nation from merging, being lost, in the surrounding and conflicting tribes. By constant warfare he won them free-

dom from enemies — and forced on them a national unity. The extraordinary and unique religious genius of that people found in David one of its earliest and best expressions. With him the richest religious poetry our race has produced began to assume those forms which in the Psalms are immortal. He must have sung some of the first great religious Jewish songs, and though we are unable positively to ascribe to him any of the Psalms as we now have them, we yet know that his commanding personality had so stamped itself on the poetic literature of the race that in after times it was natural to ascribe to the warrior-poet the best of them all.

The true poet of an epoch feels and is swayed by the passions of his time. Those times were cruel; there was little pity shown from man to man. Men were lustful and unscrupulous, and often cruel, lustful, and unscrupulous was David the king. Yet, in spite of much wrong-doing, the man was saved by that divine quality, so largely possessed by the great Jews of that far-away time — his yearning after God.

He may not have penned those deathless lines — "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" But doubtless some such longing it was that impelled him to build a temple that should permanently enshrine Jehovah's worship.

Those who are inspired to great aims must have souls stout enough to endure great disappointments. It is not given to the truly great to have here their heart's desire. So runs the story of the painful earth, and David's ambition must be thwarted just when it is wisest and most far-reaching. His political insight taught him that the nation he had organized must have its beliefs and aspirations embodied and made visible in a temple. Such a central meeting-place would cement the still but partially united tribes; would tend to educate and purify the religious instincts of the people; would serve as a strong defence against encroaching idolatries, and at the same time prove the best possible bulwark for his throne.

His political as well as his religious genius, then, urged on the building of the great temple; and if he may not accomplish the work he has so nobly planned for, it shall be Solomon's first care. "I in my trouble, in times of war, mid a reign of blood, have ever held before me the one great aim — such provisions I have made. I have done what I can. Thou, O Solomon, mayest add thereto." The long past veils from our eyes that golden temple and its worshipping throngs. What was there said and sung is but a legend to us. But the reality and worth of it are unquestionable. David's foresight and Solomon's magnificence gave shape and expression to Jewish monotheism.

We owe much to the beauty-loving Greeks; we owe much to the law-making Romans; but more, far more do we owe to the God-loving Jews. Vitalized, purified by the God-desire, round that temple grew a national life whose persistence is the wonder of all history, successfully resisting those forces of disintegration that shattered and scattered nations far

mightier than they. A national poetry grew up there, far the best religious poetry the world has ever seen. And a legal code was given to men, embodying social and religious ideals immensely in advance of any other we know of, at least in the Western world. Yes, the more the religious history of the world comes to be known, the greater the debt of mankind to the Jew appears. To him we owe a literature that still may be said to embody the wisdom and hopes of our race. It is but a truism to say that the Jewish religion had in it the capacity to grow, to change, to adapt itself. It took in many things from many peoples (probably the belief in life for man beyond the grave, from the Persians). It assimilated them, and was not assimilated by them. It could and did develop into Christianity. But where lay the secret of this power of growth and development? What had this religion, held by these puny tribes, in it that the religions of far greater and more cultivated peoples lacked? I think I am right in pointing out one great vital quality it had that

made it a growing religion, a religion that from its very nature would voice itself in new psalms, new poetry, new religious and moral teachings of preacher prophets, who looked out keenly on men and the times, and saw, with a real illumination, what duty for themselves and for their fellows meant.

That one priceless quality possessed by Jewish monotheism was *a steadfast determination to explain life in terms of God.* The God of David and Solomon, the God of the exiles and of the great Isaiahs, was more than intensely interested in man's life. He was no Jupiter, sitting far aloft, moved only to occasional interest in the struggling life of men. He was with his people, cheering, guiding, chastening, rewarding; they, as it were, made visible on earth his will; their success was his glory; their shame and fall involved humiliation for him. His word was their law; his honor their honor; *he was a God who cared.* Of course so exalted a conception of God was not born in a day. The god of the earliest days was a narrower, more merely tribal god,

than the god of later enlightened times. Men never have conceived and never can conceive of God other than as a mighty man. This is one of the well-established limitations of human thought, quite as evident in our latest philosophies as in the discarded ideals of the great men of long ago.

These Jews were cruel. The race meant nothing to them; their tribe everything. The only god they were therefore capable of worshipping was at times cruel and narrow, and *tribal like themselves;* was for them and against all others. Yet steadily, wonderfully, their idea of God grew in beauty, purity, and spiritual power, till the merely tribal god vanished, and in his place we see with wonder standing the God of the whole earth; a god to love as truly as to fear; a god whose high and holy law reached far above the attainments of the best of men. That idea held the Jew to his best. Did he stray from it for a time and fall, then some new poet, some new voice of warning or of prophecy was heard, and true religion was revived again.

Men's thoughts widen with the process of the suns, and so widening, first outgrow, and then cast aside, the older religious ideals that have been produced by them. This process, of course, is evident in the history of Jewish religion. And if the various parts of its matchless literature, which we call the Old Testament, were better arranged than they are at present in the common Bible we read, this gradual discarding of old ideas, and their replacement by new, would be much more evident than it is. Contrasting with the merely tribal god of the Exodus, let me quote a passage that gives us the God of the later Psalms. Leave out one or two lines in this marvellous poem, and not among all the prayers that in all the ages inspired men have raised to God can be found anything more exquisite in its adoration, more beautiful, more inspiring: —

Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.

If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,

Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.

How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!

Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts:

And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.[1]

It is this unique power of growth, of expanding with, and possessing itself of, the widening views of man, which has made the Jewish religion immortal. Nor do I believe that even now its vitality has quite passed away. Modern Judaism may seem to many dry and seedless; capable of producing no new religious ideals, having lost its adaptability. But the extraordinary thing about Judaism is that, speaking generally, it has not given birth to crude and harmful religious movements as have other religions. For a long time its stem may seem dry and lifeless. It has not at least burst forth into evil flower and corrupt fruit. We Christians are too hasty in concluding that that race to whom

[1] Ps. cxxxix, 7, 8, 9, 10, 17, 23, 24.

our religious debt is so unspeakably great has seen its last vision, has given forth its last message. The path of the religious Jew is not our path to-day. Christian orthodoxy still despises him and it. Still, at least, the shadows of the ignorant animosities of long ago cling to him. Once he made a fatal mistake, it is true; but has Christianity always chosen rightly? Surely few unprejudiced students of history would say as much. In the cult of the Virgin and of the saints, both East and West have widely departed from the religion of Jesus and of the earlier day. Nay, surely the time has come when Protestantism must admit that in claiming for the Bible inerrancy, and making that book the sole test of truth, it has greatly erred.

If, as we must believe, the time approaches (God in his mercy grant it may come soon) when all good men everywhere will recognize the need of subordinating, I do not say eliminating, all creeds, when good men everywhere, feeling their need of God in this world, shall turn towards good men with outstretched

hands, may it not then come to pass that the Jew, to whom above all others religion owes its greatest debt in the past, may prove capable and willing to aid effectively in that great getting together which the future has in store for us?

If you have followed me so far, you already see the point I desire to press on you in these lectures that I am to deliver. It is this: The genius and germ of a world religion were present even in early Judaism, because that religion was from the beginning committed to an explanation, first of a small tribe's life, later of man's life, in terms of God. They were but men, these Jews, and so their religious vision often grew dim. They were narrow-minded, — so were all men then, — and their religion might be narrow; a religion depended on a law, a priesthood, or a book. But their monotheism had within it that which was destined to burst through and overpass all the temporary barriers that human ignorance employs to dim the light of

God in the soul. It was to prove itself the mustard seed, least of all seeds, from which man's highest and purest concepts of God have sprung. It made God responsible for the soul of man. It dared to believe that human life was actually *a breath of God in its beginning, an honoring and serving of God in its course,* and *a returning to God at its close.* Surely this was high thinking, indeed, for those men of old time. Theirs was a vision far clearer than that given to any other sons of men. Theirs was a mighty faith; and bravely and continuously they looked to God, the God of the life of men, to justify it and to vindicate them. Surely they did not look in vain. Their miraculous survival till to-day is that great faith's best vindication. They gave to mankind Jesus the Christ, and alone among the nations of his time they survive to witness his world-wide victory.

Now it must be apparent that if we can thus think of our religion, then our thinking is fully in accord with the thoughts of men busied in other departments of knowledge and

speculation. The order of the universe as it is conceived of to-day is an order of progress and of growth. If religion is not a settled, stablished, changeless thing, but a sense of duty, a vision of the great source of all law and duty, that changes and grows clearer from age to age, then religious thinking fits in admirably with man's modern knowledge and modern methods of adding to this knowledge; and the idea that true science and true religion ever really were or ever can be at war is demonstrably absurd. Their advocates may have fought in the past and they may fight in the future — for the best and most honest-hearted of us are at times warped and prejudiced; but the spirit of strife helps no man up the hard high way, by which alone truth may be won.

If we, then, can but see once for all that there are not two ways of winning truth or gaining its great goal, but only one, and that that way is an old way, literally as old as the hills, as old as the old world's order, then surely we have gained something that is well

worth while. At best life is often a lonely business; but we are less lonely on life's pathway for the knowing that many whom we have been taught to think of as in "another camp" than ours are really only in another regiment of the very same great army, and are trying to do just what we know we must keep trying to do, too — namely, add our little of effort or discovery to what is worthy in life's slowly growing heap of things that shall endure.

I said just now that this view of religion is old as the world's order. For what is that order? A fire, mist, a planet, granite, chalk, marl, soil, an age-long process, as the result of which there at last is spread over the cooling surface of our world a thin crust of soil, on which and by which vegetable, animal, and then human life may subsist. So to us the very crust of the earth seems to cry, "Come, O man, be a fellow worker with me; for ages and ages I have been preparing myself for you. Now, O lord of creation, take up bravely thine own subtler tasks; see what I have done

to prepare myself for thy lordship. I in my trouble have so much wrought; thou mayest add thereto."

As we dip into history it is the same story. The past takes voice, the forgotten millions of long ago who have gone the way of "dusty death" seem to cry, "We fought, we bled, we died, to win for you the comparative calm and prosperity of your day. Think of us when you work and are discouraged. Think of us when you plan and are baffled. Think of us when you falter and grow weary. Add thou thereto."

The social spirit makes the same appeal. The people that have come or are coming to us come from many different nations of the earth. They are far from being the least worthy representatives of those peoples. It surely takes no small amount of courage and of energy to break the dear ties of home and fatherland and adventure into new and strange circumstances. We loudly praise, we proudly acknowledge, the heroism of those iron-souled men and women who first sought our shores. But we too often fail to recognize the pluck

and self-denial that alone enables the common emigrant of to-day to break away from a past he knows and push his lonely fortune among strange peoples and strange lands.

Believe me, it is not the weaklings of the world who are adding their bloods to ours, who are bringing their muscles and their energy to the solving of our problems and the development of our state. These are tried soldiers. They have the signs and scars of life's battle on them, have these men and women and little children. Honest, charitable, wise hosts to these multitudes we are called to be. Surely to no people did the social spirit ever more clearly appeal than to us. You are the children of the emigrant. More than two hundred and fifty years ago your fathers began to come, when nothing but the broad rich breast of an unexplored continent invited them; and since those days that strenuous hopeful tide has never ceased to flow, and your comfort and your wealth, your capacity and education to-day are the fruits and results of that flowing. Do your part. It is not the

part your fathers played. The wilderness has vanished. The savage is now scarcely more than a name by which lake, river, or mountain is known. But a vast free country, a highly organized civilization have grown up as if by magic. A great political democracy here opens wide its gate of hope and promise to the world. This is a tremendous thing that we profess to offer. It is for each of us to try to make the promise good.

A Croatian peasant had made his way to an Adriatic port. "Why," said a stranger who happened to speak his language, — "why are you leaving your fatherland and going forth to an alien people, to a land so far across the sea?" "I go," said he, "to see if there is a country where there is justice between man and man." Ah, that is a tremendous thing to ask of any country, in which poor faulty man, but half delivered from the power of the beast within him, lives and rules. Yet such is the unquenchable and growing sense of righteousness in us that we will not be contented with even the poor Croatian's dream, but we must

add to it the warming touch of brotherly love that alone makes dear the thought of home or fatherland. Yes, mankind evidently expects much of us. And it is our high calling, our deep religious duty not to disappoint mankind of its hope. But let us not go blindfold towards the future. To make good, all that is best in all of us is likely to be taxed to the very utmost.

The brave pioneers I spoke of, even the fighting men of '61–'65, had a task that was simplicity itself compared to the task confronting us. It is when we are thoughtful, when we find ourselves sitting down and trying to do what Jesus advised men to do, — count the cost of things, and try our souls to see if we are ready to play our part, able with our ten thousand to meet him that cometh against us with twenty thousand, — it is, I say, when the healthy mood is on us that we feel our real resting-place is alone found in God; in God and his order; that good must win in the end because it is good, and light overcome the darkness because it is light; that

greater is He that is with us than all that can be against us; that the success of the Kingdom of Heaven depends on no movement in races of men, but on the very nature of things.

> It fortifies my soul to know
> That though I perish, truth is so;
> That howsoe'er I stray and range,
> Whate'er I do, thou dost not change.
> I steadier step when I recall
> That, though I slip, thou dost not fall.

Yes, God back of the nature of things makes good. "He that believeth shall not make haste," says the old Book. And the man grasping this strong consolation is not dismayed or disappointed by the slow grinding of God's grist, nor by the at times imperceptible progress of what we call civilization. Civilization rises as the coral islands rise, through dark and unrecorded ages. Gerald Massey, the poet of Chartist days in England, truly said,

> We rise like corals grave by grave
> That have a pathway sunward.

Down in the dark sea depths the foundations of future life and beauty are slowly laid. Each generation of little toilers lives, builds,

dies, and broad and strong the foundations are cemented together. Slowly the adamant building mounts to the upper sunlit waters, till at last the crispy, creamy spray marks where they meet the sun. To all the winds and forces of the upper world the little builders seem to cry, "For ages and ages in the darkness we have toiled and died. Now, add ye to what we have done."

And so the slow-growing débris of ocean comes "and adds thereto," and the sea birds come and "add thereto" — and the grasses and trees come; and at last comes wandering, careless man, and takes the sea island for his home. At first he lives an almost bestial life, is content merely to exist. The shellfish and the nut sustain him; the palm leaf or the cave give him shelter. But a day dawns when mysteriously the spirit of the great Whole takes voice within him; the spirit that bade the coral insect toil in the salt, sunless gulfs of the sea, that made the bird build, and the grass grow — the same spirit is in him, and in him finds a *voice*.

He begins dimly to see something of the meaning of it all; the age-long voice of God, first a blind instinct, then slowly shaping in the dim recesses of his mind an idea of law. From the coral beneath his feet, from the palm tree above his head, from the surf's thunder on the reef, from the undiscovered depths of his own soul, the voice comes. "We in our trouble have done what we could. O man, Lord of creation, *thou who art the explanation and justification of our long travail, add thou thereto.*" And so for the first time the song of the world becomes articulate; and he — a son of God, for whom all things have so long waited — gathers his children round him as life's forces fail him, and says, "It is worth while; it is well worth while, my children. It is for you to carry forward the cause of good. Painful ages have spent themselves in preparing the way you are called to walk in. Lives innumerable struggled and died to make it smooth. The very soil you live by is one mighty grave. The very ground you tread on is holy. See, then, that you play

your part in building the temple of the Lord." Ah, true it is —

> Our lives are beautiful through drudgeries
> Of those who gave them time and space to grow
> Through generations to the perfect curve.
> Our hair has got the gold, because the dust
> Of the world's highways often soiled the feet of our forefathers,
> And the blue-veined hands were moulded to their tenderness of touch
> By centuries of labor rude and hard.

As I conclude, let me leave the general aspect of this question, and come to a personal view of it. There are few, indeed, of us who, as we allow our thoughts to search the past, do not recall, it may be with something of remorse, yet also with gratitude, the good, the lovely, the loving we knew long ago. Full well we know that any good thing there is in us, any worthy thing we have accomplished, is greatly due to them: fathers and mothers and dear friends who did much, and suffered much, to make us better than we promised to be — to give us a prospect of truly succeeding in life. Yes, there are many of you young people listening to me now who could not

possibly have hoped to enjoy the opportunities of a great university had not those who loved you slaved and denied themselves for long cruel years, that the splendid chance that now is yours might be won for you. Ah, the best of us need sometimes to be reminded of these commonplaces of home life. Some of us forget them, or take them as matters of course, for it is sadly possible to suffer ideals that kept alive faith and hope and the confidence in the worth-while of life, in parents whose circumstances were those of hardship, to wither away and fail in the children whose lives are lives of ease. It is the thought of my own home that makes me speak thus to you — a home in Ireland, where father and mother and eight little children lived happily together on fifteen hundred dollars a year. Eight mouths to feed, bodies to clothe, and minds to educate, on that modest sum. If we had anything nice to eat — or unusually good to cover us — it was because they denied themselves. We had beautiful scenery at our doors, and beautiful flowers in our garden.

My father's roses were famous, and as a treat I was allowed to help my mother in her garden, where, during summer, she was busy long before my early school hour of seven o'clock. Brave in spirit but frail in body was our mother, and pain long and hard claimed her while we were yet very young. So we went forth into the wide world each to fight his way, and realized little, indeed, how great was our debt to that little vicarage home, or to those who had made it so soft and warm a resting-place for the young brood. Ah, and then — death broke up the circle, and she who was its central power was gone, and we could only think of things, and wish we had but thought them sooner, so that we might have said them. For it is poor and unsatisfactory business to think loving things of those we owe everything to, and then to lock up our thoughts in our breasts, so none is the wiser. Undignified talking this for a university lecturer, yet, since it is true, though God knows how small a part of the truth, it shall stand. Perhaps it may help some here to a

step they never surely will regret; help you to cast false shyness and shame aside, and go to some in whose debt you heavily are, and do what you can, not to discharge it, — that cannot be, — but at least to acknowledge it.

Of ourselves we have done very little; all intelligent people are beginning to recognize this. Yet the false, ignorant spirit of conceit and brag is with us still. "I am what I am because I won my own success. I won life's game off my own bat. I have made good." Words still too common, alas! The words of an ignorant and ungrateful fool.

"I know what I know because I studied long and hard. I have searched and found what I needed, what I sought." No true scholar speaks thus. He knows too well that it is to the study of others, often of forgotten and unrewarded men, that he owes such little light of uncertain knowledge as may illumine the semi-darkness of his mind. "I have what I have because I earned it. I will do what I will with my own." Enlightened sense of com-

mon justice is fast hastening to take this last sort of fool by the throat, and if common sense cannot teach him his folly and dishonesty, common law surely will.

We are only dusty soldiers in a great army on a long, long march; we advance and retreat, sway onward, bend backward in an age-long struggle; little coral insects building, in darkness and storm, the living places of the far future. We need religion or we shall not believe in the worth-whileness of it all. And we, lacking it, will stray from the marching line to grasp at flowers that wither, or to seize on dangerous fruits that decay and turn to dust. And the religion we must have must be a religion justifying man's life on this earth, and giving some insight as to earth's meaning. *Here and now it must help us see that goodness is worth the trouble it costs;* that we are in honor bound to aim for the highest. We shall not always see this. We may stray from the marching line, to gather the flowers, to surfeit ourselves on the fruit; but then such

excursions are things to blush for, are desertions of good comrades, and bring danger to them and shame to ourselves. I believe such a reasonable and necessary religion Jesus Christ brought to men. More than that, I believe that he is revealing such a religion to us to-day; that even now he speaks to the toilers, the truth-seekers, the lovers of good, the pitiful, the brave, everywhere; that not only to those who make a success of their struggle after better things, but to the vastly larger number who make what seems a failure of it, he speaks.

If this is true, how, then, account for the discouragement and division so evident to-day in the Christian churches? Discouragement is surely not generally in the air. In all other departments of life there is no lack of buoyancy and confidence. There is a very general consciousness that we are accomplishing something, that we are adding to the achievements of our fathers, that we are "making good." Knowledge advances with leaps and bounds. We are uncovering some of Nature's secrets.

We are using her beneficent resources to overcome or mitigate the pains and penalties she has for so long laid remorselessly on us. Hopefully, confidently, we are learning to face our problems and to prepare for our future.

Can we truthfully claim that this is religion's attitude also? I fear we cannot; at least in so far as the orthodox churches express for us religion. In the churches a spirit of doubt, disheartenment, and division is too evident, and one of its chief causes I hold to be this, the churches' fear of change. They always have feared it, and that fear, harmful and limiting as it has proved in the (shall I call them?) dormant ages, is doubly so in times like our own, when a rush of new ideas, a torrent of life, sweeps through the veins of mankind. The churches are dismayed by the clamorous demands made on them both from within and from without their borders. They are in danger of forgetting the very nature of the truth they only exist to conserve and reveal, namely, no religion can help or inspire man when it ceases to explain his life in terms

of God. It is cold comfort to the scholar to believe that his forbears worshipped God as they pursued their studies, but as for him he must make choice between his studies and his father's God. The spirit of timidity is the very last spirit that can accomplish any worthy thing to-day. Scholarship advances everywhere with joy. Its confident joy is its strength. In all departments of man's searching he goes forth bravely to seek the truth, assured that the truth is a good thing, and well worth the seeking; that pain and self-denial are well endured if he but win a tiny grain of truth, to be reverently added to the slowly mounting heap of man's acquirement. The religious searcher after truth, or rather, I should say, the student who remains in the pale of orthodoxy, is alone hampered. Voices that speak with authority, and other voices, at least as urgent, who have no authorization at all, alike bid him to be careful. "You may search where you like," they cry, "but beware that you only find what we approve (who ourselves have no time or ability to search).

Otherwise you must leave our company; you must take your place outside the pale of organized Christianity."

It is all wrong, terribly wrong. Religion and life are one. *There are no two kinds of truth. There are no two ways of finding truth.* And if in a time when life is changing, greatly, gloriously, religion hesitates to change too, then life and religion must, temporarily at least, take different roads and part company, and that means the saddening of life and the withering of religion.

It is, then, to the inevitableness and reasonableness of change in our religious beliefs, as in every other department of our lives, that I am now going to call your attention. Jesus was a profound believer in change, he himself proclaimed momentous changes, yet everything he taught was rooted in and sprang from the past. Change, he said, was not necessarily the destruction of the past, but the fulfilment of it. The nature of truth everywhere is the same — it is seed; and seed must die that it may grow, and change that it may live.

II

JESUS' DOCTRINE OF THE SEED: THE METHOD OF GROWTH AND CHANGE

Jesus said, "So is the Kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; . . . and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself." — Mark IV, 26–28.

I SAID the Jewish religion was an effort to explain life in terms of God; life as they saw it; to justify life as they knew it. That is what a real religion must ever attempt to do if it would live at all.

From the nature of things such a religion is committed to change. Its advocates and defenders may forget, and often have forgotten this, may and often do fiercely deny and resent it, but the inevitable fact remains. For what is life? Life is an open book in which each generation of men writes its own story, and that story is completely different from all the stories that have preceded it. Life is

a great building, rising as the coral islands rose —

> We rise like corals grave by grave
> That have a pathway sunward.

Each generation, each race of men adds its course of stone or brick or perishable rubble to what other builders have built before it. The problems of each decade change. If religion only affords answers to the questions of days gone by, men living in a vital present will soon cease to question it. So much is evident, surely.

There are those who are quick to recognize this need of flexibility in religious formulæ, and at the same time profess themselves distressed at the doubtfulness and uncertainty that often characterizes the best religious teaching they have access to. This is not a reasonable position to take. Real religion, true to its best ideals, bending all its energy to illumine and explain life's tragedies and mysteries, must of necessity halt, hesitate, and change, just because life halts and changes. It should be scarcely necessary to do more

than state this fact, to commend its reasonableness and necessity; but surely it is often quite forgotten by those who should know better. Consider our own national life — free beyond compare, unburdened, unsaddened by the tragic and costly pasts that other nations have known. These others may advance hardily into the future, yet they are encumbered with debts to be discharged. They are as men no longer young, seamed and scarred by wounds that have not only left indelible marks, but have drained away much of their vigor and national energy. The mistakes and sins of other times lie heavily on the freest of them. But we! We have only our own brief problems to solve, our own hastily contracted debts to pay, and yet they are quite sufficient to give us cause for thoughtfulness. Freest, youngest, richest, strongest of the nations we are, yet we have our problems, and they can only be successfully met in a spirit of confident faith in God and man. In that faith we may rejoice in our past, glory in what our forefathers won of freedom and

unity, but we surely cannot continue to grow or to prosper if our eyes are chiefly directed to the past. Questions of to-day press on us that must be answered; duties that must be done. Do we falter before them because we cannot be always certain of the best and wisest thing to do, the straightest course to take? In these social matters, there is no one authoritative voice to answer oracularly our question; no one inspired leader to tell us how to accomplish our duty. No, up and down the land these things must be debated — in workshop and in Wall Street; in university, lecture-hall, and labor-union meeting; and in these, many conclusions are arrived at, many halting and sometimes conflicting theories advanced. Yet, since we believe that men generally are trying to see straight and do right, we believe that out of the babel and confusion a clearer vision of duty, a stride forward in social progress, will in time be won. So we do not wait for an infallible leadership, but follow such light as we have, attempting bravely to do the thing that comes next to hand.

So much is evidently true of our national life, and since it is true, we are not at all dismayed if we see that great human column of the nation's progress at times sway, at times seem to stop and crumble away at the head, as it storms onward on life's battle-field. "Such is life," we say. Only by struggle, by fierce contrast and comparison can the best in ideas or the best in men win out, and be approved as fittest to last and survive.

Yes, such is life's law of progress, and truth's law. Such is the law of all brave adventure, and of all true discovery, and *such must be religion's law too.* To separate religion from these, to demand for it another and a different order of progress, is fatal to its vitality, is fatal to its final acceptance by thinking men. Yet good men are ever forgetting this, and Jesus sought to remind them of it when he gave forth his great doctrine of the Seed.

Jesus as a teacher found himself confronted by an immense development of religious ideas that had grown up round the simple and

earlier faith of his race. There was nothing extraordinary in this; nay, it was natural and necessary. Growth and addition are an evidence of life. "Add thou thereto" is the voice of every living faith. It is a truism of religious history to say that, so soon as in any religion signs of growth and addition fail, that religion is decaying, and must soon, in the nature of things, take its place among the vast number of forgotten beliefs that flourished but for a time. These growths are like the branches of a tree. Some will endure all stress of storm and sun, be incorporated in the tree, and live in its life so long as the tree lives; and some have not enough vitality to endure, but fall or are cut away, and the tree lives on without them, and is the better for the parting.

Now a time had arrived in the religious life of Judaism when these accumulations had to be dealt with. A house-cleaning of the faith was due, and Jesus felt that this heavy and thankless task was laid on him. The life of the spirit was in Judaism still, but so overlaid

by the garments men had woven to protect it, so hidden by the pictures they had painted to explain it, that garments or pictures were by the multitude taken for the vital realities themselves.

Jesus constantly proclaims that true religion is a growing thing. He will give place to no man in honoring the men by whom the spirit of the ever-living God spake in the times of the past; but he believes that God as truly speaks to men in his own times as in those great days of long ago. And more than that, he believes that God will as truly continue to speak to men in the times that lie beyond; that those who come after him will see clearer lights and do greater deeds than he.[1]

Jesus is in short an evolutionist. He will not cast himself loose from the past. He knows well, he ever insists, that he is what he is; he knows what he knows, because of it. Instinctively he knows that all true development and progress are out of, and because of, all that has gone before. He would preserve,

[1] See John xiv, 12.

not destroy, those structures, habits, tendencies, which have proved themselves to be suitable and worthy. Again and again he protests that he is no destroyer, but a constructor. When he is confronted by his enemies, among whom are numbered the most religious men of the time, when they oppose his teaching and accuse him of heresy, blasphemy, and treason to the cause of the God of the Jews, he confounds them by turning to the old writings. The law, the psalms, the prophets, all in turn he quotes with a profound knowledge, with a spiritual insight and acumen that are astounding and convincing. His enemies may know the letter of religion and of its record; its inner, truer meaning lies open to his mind. His opponents are often convinced and generally silenced.

Yes, the life of the spirit was in Judaism still. If it had not been so, then Jesus' proclamation and vindication of it against the ritualists would have quite failed, and his religion would have died with him. As it was, he saved the precious thing he loved; he lifted

it up; he glorified and enlarged it. It had been a tribal religion; he made it a religion of the Western world.

Yet surely Jesus himself was right in his judgment of what he came to do (though in after centuries orthodoxy has persistently proclaimed him mistaken). It was to proclaim a God and Father long ago proclaimed, to strip off the veils and coverings good men had mistakenly spread over his face, and push aside the poor daubed pictures they had painted of him.

It was not to destroy the law or the prophets, but to fulfil; not to pull down the Temple, but to tell its meaning; not to proclaim a new God, but a God long ago known and worshipped, — the Father, not of some favored Jews, but of all. His vision of God was his own, *but it was not a complete vision.* He says so. But by its light he could and did claim to discriminate between what was of merely temporary and what of permanent value in the Jewish religion of the day. (Of other religions he knew nothing.) He made

God nearer, clearer, to simple men. He gave them a more inspiring view of duty, a calmer courage, a purer faith. He always appealed to the divine quality in men. He called on them to see the light. He told them they had the power to follow it. He had no quarrel with authority. The priests and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Their official position he accepts, for he is a Jew. But their perversion of the truth they profess to defend he denounces, for the one aim and end of his life is to be true, and to speak the truth; and all things that hide or distort the truth are not of God, but of evil.

Thus Jesus went forth upon his lonely way. He was called a destroyer; he was in truth an evolutionist. He courted and met a destroyer's doom, and died for an everlasting principle.[1]

[1] After delivering these lectures, I read Harnack's *Constitution and Law of the Church*, which has just been given us in an English translation. To my great satisfaction, I find that this profound scholar fully upholds and endorses the view I have ventured to present of Jesus' relation to Judaism. On page 4 of the Introduction, Harnack says: "The Church is younger and older than Jesus. It existed in a certain sense long before him. It was founded by the prophets, in the first

That principle was the principle of the *seed*. Religious truth is a divine seed sown in human life. There is nothing new or startling in that, you say; every one admits as much. But it is not so. So far as I know, or have been able to learn, Jesus Christ was the first religious teacher so to define truth and man's relation to it. His disciples certainly at first did not understand the significance of this definition of his. To his opponents and detractors the simile itself must have been meaningless, and his application of it aroused their fear and wrath. It was a sweetly reasonable doctrine, but it was also an epoch-making doctrine. For it asserted not merely that truth (as we poor men down here get to see it) may grow and change from age to age, but that by virtue of its very nature and environment, it *must* so grow and change or speedily die. It was a definition that struck hard at one of the most cherished beliefs, not of the Jewish people alone, but of the whole race. To accept it

place, within Israel, but even at that time it pointed beyond itself. All subsequent developments are changes of form."

meant that the danger to true religion arises not only from those who attack its claims from without, but from those, its would-be, often honest-minded defenders, who champion its cause from within.

The very zeal of those who defend religion might, in Jesus' view, prove a chief cause of danger; might threaten and even destroy the very precious thing they were fain to defend. In the very interests of the truth itself, many such men, in all religions, in all parts of the world, have been found, who manfully, devotedly protested against change in the belief they loved. Those advocating change were to them, by that very advocacy, clearly revealed as enemies of their great cause of truth — profaners, desecrators of the shrines of the gods. If circumstances place power in such men's hands, without question or quarter, they will unhesitatingly use such power to crush to the earth these mistaken, nay, wicked advocates of what to them is nothing less than a proclamation of religious anarchy and blasphemy.

No, Jesus' definition is not so simple as it sounds. It can be quoted as a justification for all sorts of religious movements, sane and insane. It can be made, and has been made by the incontinent reformer, to cover and justify all reformations, even those of the iconoclast; to justify every crude and ephemeral heresy, from early gnosticism to the modern monstrosities of Mormonism and Christian Science.

I think I am safe in saying that as a whole the early Christian teachers did not understand the vital importance of this aspect of the Master's teaching. They fought shy of it. Those who did give prominence to the idea of development in Christianity, to the seed principle, as it were, though among them were the most brilliant minds of the time, often seem to have got out of touch with the general life of the Church (perhaps the Church was not yet ready for their teaching). Men who are out of touch with the general life of their time are, from the very nature of the isolation imposed on them, inclined to over-emphasis, over-statement, of the supremely

good thing they see, and so, like a too heavily laden branch in a not too fruitful tree, they fall away, by reason of their own excess of productiveness, from the parent stem. Such is the sad history of many a heresy, of many a reform. The extremist has lost touch with the main trunk of the tree, which was necessary to him, and the semi-barren tree has lost the fruitful bough, which was a grievous loss to it.

The forced importance, the wide significance of this simile of the *seed*, which Jesus chooses to explain the nature of his teaching and the quality and reproductive power of his word, are only realized as we remember that this insistence of his on the living, growing, changing property of truth runs through all he says, influences all he does. He dwells on it and enforces it. He is attacked by his enemies for proclaiming it, and finally it is the doctrine that sends him to his cross.

Let me, then, briefly touch on the cause of this bitterness of opposition to a principle so reasonable.

Conservatism always makes a good fight for its own. In such proportion as we value what we hold, we rally our best forces to defend it. Conservatism has proved itself most stubborn of opponents for this very reason. It is the high value we attach to our beliefs that makes us rally to their defence against any and all who would alter them. In the hearts of multitudes of men the religious forms that have surrounded their youth are associated with what in retrospect seems to them beautiful and best worth having. It is the seed sown in youth's springtime, ideas implanted within us while we are very young, that root themselves most deeply. They take up more space within us than we ourselves are always aware, but they are also apt to lie more dormant than those ideas we call the secular. The stress and strain of life is on us. We are occupied with much serving. We are forced to activity in many ways, but this is apt not to be so true in our religious thinking.

No great religious disputes have arisen in

our time—at least none that have called men to make sacrifices for what they believe, and so (I am only describing the case of the ordinary man) the deeply planted ideas of our earliest days remain pretty much as they were. Besides, we are forced to such restlessness, such perpetual effort, in order to hold our own in many departments of our life, that we find it pleasant to have a quiet corner in it somewhere. And if that corner is a little dusty from disuse, well, the very dust has a suggestion of an Old-World perfume, as those lavender-sprinkled cupboards of our mothers had, where the most precious household belongings were laid away from the vulgar eye. "Let us leave these sacred things alone," we say. "Let us come to the religion of our forefathers to rest. There is so much new that we are obliged to study and use, so much in each department of life that must be changed, let us forget it here as long as we may. In social, political, mercantile, or artistic life, momentous change is everywhere in the air. Radicalism is forced on us. Do let us be at least conservative in

our religion. What is good enough for our parents is good enough for us."

I am persuaded that this is a more common attitude than is generally supposed, and of course it is a very dead-and-alive and very unreal attitude. It can only result in the slow dying-out in a man of those deeply important things within him that he thinks he values most, but really neglects, till at last of him it may be true —

> Some souls are serfs among the free,
> While others nobly thrive ;
> They stand just where their fathers stood,
> Dead even while they live.

But not to digress too far!

From modern excuses for a do-nothing policy in religious thinking, let me hark back to the consideration of those circumstances that made Jesus seem a religious anarchist to the pious conservatism of his time, and brought down on him the hatred of the rulers of his people. Why should these people have opposed him bitterly as they did? Jesus himself was ever ready to recognize constituted author-

ity. "The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Whatsoever they say unto you, do therefore, but be ye not like to them." This was ever his attitude to the officers of the national religion as well as those charged with more secular rule. Thus, again, to the man who came to be healed he says: "Go show thyself to the priests and offer the gift that Moses commanded for a testimony to them" — i.e. "to prove to them that I am a law-abiding, God-honoring Jew, intent on obeying the law as well as the spirit of our country's religion."

This being his attitude, how, then, account for the furious hatred that was satisfied with nothing less for him than the doom of the shameful cross? Were these priests and scribes, these politico-religious men that were the party bosses of their day — were they altogether evil? Were they hardened against all pity, and hopelessly bad? By no means. But they were committed, both by their inclinations and by their interests, to a fixed conservatism.

The history of the Jews' fight for freedom

since the return from captivity is a great story. The men who waged that struggle were men of high purpose, of desperate courage, and of faith in God. And doubtless these their successors had possibilities of heroism within them. They were of the same lump as those who, so soon after the days of Jesus, called together for the defence of all they held most dear the banded force of the little nation. And then behind the sacred city's wall, and later from street to street and court to court, made against the irresistible power and discipline of Rome one of the most hopelessly heroic defences recorded in history.

These men who opposed Jesus then were far from being utterly bad men. Yet they mistook their way. They ruined (as Jesus foretold they would) their country, and they did all that evil men might do to quench the light of the world. It is a heavy indictment that history has lodged against them, and yet they only did what others have done again and again. They were at least as much the victims of a mistaken policy as they were the

perpetrators of a crime, and the order we live under punishes us as promptly for one as for the other.

As I said, then, before, the very value the Jews and their leaders attached to the religion, of which they rightly believed themselves to be the divinely appointed guardians, made them fanatically opposed to any changes in it — whether forced on them by foreign powers from without, or promulgated by unauthorized and irresponsible teachers, as they believed them to be, from within.

Then their cause of quarrel with the Lord was clear — unmistakably clear. They would willingly die to defend what they thought was the truth, but what was actually only the corpse whence truth, the life, had fled. *They were the "stand-patters" of their time. Jesus was the Radical of his.* Jesus stood for the growth-principle, believed in the certainty and necessity of development and change in man's view of God and of his truth. These others held fast by the sacred deposit the nation had received. They regarded it as a

treasure no hands but their own might touch — an Ark of the Covenant, so many inches wide, so many long, containing so many sacred words and letters of directly revealed truth; nay, every letter traced, as their holy tradition had it, by the finger of God. Theirs was the mistake, still made by good but misguided men to-day, that "the Faith once delivered to the saints" was only to be expressed in the dogmas they propounded and defended.

Needless to say, in the formulation of their theory, these religious conservators ignored both present facts and past history; ignored the fact, which all scholars at that time knew well, that age by age round that law had grown up a vast mass of commentary and subtle explanation that had often, at least in the popular mind, become confused with the divine law itself. Jesus had accurately summed up the whole religious situation when he said, "Ye have made the law of God of none effect through your tradition."

I dwell on this fatal conservatism of the opponents of our Lord, not chiefly because it

explains the source of the orthodox hatred he drew down on himself, but particularly because it furnishes an admirable illustration of a spirit that always has been and ever will be active in the mistaken defence of what it deems to be the truth — "*a spirit of irreligious solicitude for God*," I would call it. Some old saint somewhere gave it that name. It seems to fit the case.

This spirit of irreligious solicitude for God is not the spirit of one age only, but of all ages. It has been fatally active not in the history of Christianity alone. Its presence is evident in the history of all the great religions. Earlier and purer Mohammedanism has suffered, as Judaism suffered, at the hands of its self-constituted guardians and exponents. A Mohammedan reformer might also truly say, "Ye have made God's law of none effect through your tradition."

Looking back through the dim spectacles of history on the struggle round the person and teaching of Jesus, it seems a one-sided affair. All goodness and beauty on one side;

all that is vile and vicious on the other. Ignorant, unhistoric ages have poured their vituperation on the men who prepared the way for the Cross, and then firmly forced its victim to his inevitable doom. But this was not Jesus' own view. He was full of mercy and charity for the generation that rejected and martyred him. Of priest, Pharisee, scribe, and multitude it was alike true, "They knew not what they did"; and yet their own history might have enlightened them. Let us look backward for a moment.

The sacred religion of the Jews had already survived more than one catastrophe, had come through more than one tempest, had proved its possession of a vital power that no contemporary religion seems to have possessed. In my first lecture I tried to trace the reasonableness and necessity of the organic form which that religion took. The Temple, the one holy place, its priestly order, its rich ritual, served as the necessary centre of the nation's life, a nation, the special office of which was to preserve for our race a pure monothe-

ism. Other nations might gather round their kings and the temples of many gods. The Jews stood fast round the temple of one God, which took precedence of the throne of any Jewish king.

In no land, in no religion, so far as I know, was there any counterpart to that sacredly unique building at Jerusalem. The vitality of this religion was to be subjected to a terrible test. There befell it a catastrophe that swept people and temple away. Conquest, followed by national transplantation, was a common fate enough in those cruel days of old. To consolidate their strength, the greater peoples laid ruthless hands upon the less, who speedily were henceforth lost to history, they and their traditions disappearing forever. The rude Assyrian captain, standing before Jerusalem's wall, spake no more than the truth when he said, "Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered at all his land out of the hand of the King of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and of Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? Have they

delivered Samaria out of my hand? Who are they, among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?"

Why, indeed, should Judah's case prove different from these? So it seemed, when finally the conquering horde swept over the land and the city. The sacred places are desecrated, every precious and holy thing is carried away. Quenched is the only light of Israel's God, and faithful and faithless have perished together.

Then a wonderful thing — a thing without a parallel in all history — comes to pass. Bereft of all religious opportunity, the great soul of a little people arises, and takes hold on the skirts of God. Without a temple or an altar, without a priestly order or any rites of sacrifice, in a remote and heathen land, the flame of a true worship of a true God flickers up in the darkness. In the hearts of brave men and women, in the voices of faithful preachers and poets, it was heard. The nation had truly

gone down into its hell, and there it found its God anew.

And so a national miracle was wrought, and these Jewish tribes — what was left of them, unimportant in their hour of prosperity even, diminished to a mere handful in their hour of loss — achieved what none of the great peoples of the earth ever achieved — a *national resurrection.*

Needless to say, these returning survivors of a seventy years' captivity were no common men, were moved by no commonplace impulse. They came back wiser and more sober men. Yes, more than that. They came back with a larger faith, with a hope that till then had not (so far as we can learn from their pre-captivity writings) been any part of their religion — the hope of personal immortality after death. Their bitter experience had tended to teach them that God cared, not for the nation only as the guardian of his truth, but for the individual too. They had learned to love their land, their temple, their law, their priestly order, and greatly yet they were to fight and

suffer for these things. But the God who had led them back cared for something more even than these. He cared for *man*. Cut off from all they had been taught to hold sacred, all that their divinely given law had insistently proclaimed necessary, denied priest, sacrifice, temple, altar, God had not denied himself to them. He had not turned away his face from them in their exile. He had hearkened to the voice of their prayer. Is it too much to say that, while they were exiles worshipping without a temple, the seed of that sublime truth which in after years was to be voiced by Jesus the Jew found lodgment in the Jewish nation's heart, and dimly the best of them foresaw a day when the place or mode of man's worship should matter little, and the spirit of that worship matter all? when "neither in Gerzim, nor yet at Jerusalem should men worship the Father, for he is a spirit and seeketh true worshippers to worship him in spirit and in truth"?

Had, then, the glorious temple planned by David, the poet king, and builded by Solomon,

quite failed of its purpose? Surely not. It had, as it were, anchored the Jewish people during dark, stormy times. It had enabled the Jew to resist the disintegrating forces of a period during which the nations surrounding them seem one after another to have disappeared. It had accomplished more. It had helped to foster in the very heart of the Jew an understanding of and a love for monotheism, that no national calamity, not even a national exile among alien religionists, could overcome or destroy.

The exile, then, had its uses. Its teachings were never, we may believe, quite lost. But by the time Jesus came they had in their turn been overlaid and long forgotten. The inevitable (shall we call it?) conservatism of human nature had again asserted itself. Very soon it had built up round the growing seed of the truth new protecting walls and shields. The divine deposit of seed that the heathen captivity could not kill was so precious it must be carefully guarded in a *Pot*. Then the pot itself becomes precious, and naturally so, because it protects the seed. Presently the seed grows

and sprouts above the pot, for it has life, *it is seed*, gets, in short, too big for the pot. And what are you going to do about it?

Ah, this quality of growth is a troublesome and painful thing — pain and striving, change and decay it means, but there is no real joy or power in living without it. We men are ever making choice between *the growing seed and the containing pot*, and as we choose wisely or ill, we succeed or we fail in life's great task, to advance or oppose the Kingdom of God and of truth.

In the realm of what is called the practical, the penalties for refusal to acknowledge or obey the law of change are so severe, are so immediately operative, that stupidity itself cannot ignore or evade them. A man will insist on doing business on the old stand where his father did it before him. His father succeeded there — he cannot. Business has drifted away from that quarter. He must follow the drift or lose his living. Harsh experience ruthlessly forces change on the most conservative business or professional man. If he put the pot's

life before the seed's life, he is sooner or later a failure. The man who will not move on is lost. And knowing this, we send our boys to the best schools, colleges, universities, and insist that those who teach them, or supervise their studies there, should be men well acquainted with the last discoveries of science or latest conclusions of history. Let me sin against the law of progress in my business, in my daily contact with my fellows, and I am so immediately punished that I am not likely quickly to sin again. In other departments of my life, though of course the same law holds good, I may not be so quick to see or prove its operation. If my child is dangerously sick and I choose a doctor, I will insist that he is a man whose conservatism has not prevented his giving thorough study to the new and wonderful medical discoveries of our day. I will not endure the idea that, because of any fad of his, my child should be denied the use of the serum for diphtheria, for instance, or Pasteur's treatment for rabies. But in still other departments of life, where reality is not so ruthlessly forced

on me, and where I do not so quickly pay for my folly, it is just as likely as not that I will play the fool. I who insist that the pot shall not be preferred to the seed may be found putting up, just as the Jews did, a very pretty defence pro pot, contra seed. I may be ready to notice and condemn this fatally mistaken tendency in other men, or in other ages than my own, and yet range myself with those who are playing the very same part, advocating the same principle, in religious, sociological, or ethical matters to-day.

It is an easy matter to condemn those brave and obstinate Jews of long ago, but few trouble themselves to think out the reasons they had for a choice that to after ages appeared the wickedest, the most unreasonable that men could have made. But if it is ever right to prefer the life of the pot to the life of the seed it enshields, their choice was not so unreasonable.

Every reform — what is it but the *seed power* triumphing over the *pot power?* And no sooner are the shards of the once precious

pot scattered abroad than we set to work to mould and bake a new pot — larger, more liberal in its measure — to contain the expanded seed.

"Now, surely," we say to ourselves, "we have something so wisely liberal, so comprehensive, so purely true, all men can accept it. The holy seed has become, indeed, a tree. We admit as much — nay, we glory in it. But see what we have done. Here is a great hedge we have planted to protect our *tree* of truth. Here is a comprehensive creed we have evolved, to explain its origin, its nature, and the laws of its growth. The destructive changes of the past were necessary. The cruel breakings of the pots of other ages had to be. But now at last, see this new scheme, this splendid, all-containing pot of ours. These views of God, these definitions of his truth, are so catholic, so comprehensive, they will surely stand. May we not now at last hope to enjoy unity and peace? All reasonable men cannot hesitate to accept them. Here at last is a sound credal platform, wide enough for all good men to

stand together on, firmly built and strong enough to support us all."

So, in all ages, often the wisest and bravest and best have argued — so they still argue to-day; and yet their conclusions have proved fallacious, their definitions failed to define, their comprehensions failed to comprehend. Like old pots, cracked and useless, they were fated to be discarded by those who came after them, men who proved themselves as truly truth-seekers in their newer day and generation as these first had been valued for truth in the times before. For, ah! what is history? What but the story of the thoughts of men that widen with the process of the suns?

The reformer often makes the same mistake as the tyrant. The tyrant consolidates his power till the reformer casts him down. The reformer sees an evil thing and valiantly strives to destroy it. On its ruin he builds the house of his fortune, and that house stands till the next age finds something false or dangerous or inadequate in it, and lo! a new

reformer arises and casts it down. For sadly true it is that the reforms of one age may become the tyrannies of the next. The much-lauded Puritan struck bravely at the tyranny of kings. It was a noble and a timely stroke. But scarcely had the Stuart's head fallen before the Puritan yoke lay heavy on freedom's neck in England. The Puritan, like all Protestants, knew how bravely to protest against error. He thought he had the truth and all the truth, and was ready and willing to give it to men, but to give men *liberty* as well as the truth was quite another matter. It was full time that the pot of sacred monarchy was broken — and very thoroughly broken it was; but in a few years the iron pot of Puritanism that shattered it had itself, in the interests of freedom, truth, and mankind, to be shattered, too.

Let me add one other historic illustration of the point I urge. On our Western continent, at about the same time that privilege and Puritanism were settling their momentous dispute in England, an extraordinary enter-

prise was attempted by extraordinary men. "These," as our great historian Parkman eloquently says, "were no stern exiles seeking on barbarous shores an asylum for a persecuted faith. Rank, wealth, power, and royalty itself smiled on their enterprise and bade them Godspeed. Yet, withal, a fervor more intense, a self-abnegation more complete, a self-devotion more constant and enduring, will scarcely find its record on the page of human history." Unlike as men could be to the stern and outlawed band that landed at Plymouth Rock, undoubtedly they were; yet was their courage as high, their aims not less noble. They would win the vast and unknown wilderness of North America, first to God, and then to France. To do so, they made light of danger and cheerfully went forth into a wilderness where often death by famine or by torture awaited them. Such was Jesuitry at its best—in 1637. Before the end of that seventeenth century, the Canadian Jesuit had become at least as much a politician as a missionary, and in the new world, as in the old,

he was scheming and plotting to fasten the yoke of civil and religious bondage on men — was pursuing the path that, spite of splendid self-sacrifice, has made the very name of Jesuit hated wherever progress and liberty are known.

Those men heard the call of God and they heeded it, and the world still marvels at the sublime courage of their martyrdom. But they allowed themselves to be seduced from the high and narrow way. *Irreligious solicitude for God betrayed them,* as so often it has betrayed the greatest soldiers of the cause. They came to value the dead pot more than the living seed; and thus inevitably it came about that the cause of the light against the darkness had to be entrusted to more progressive, more enlightened, but perhaps *not better* men than they.

"A sower went forth to sow." "The Kingdom of Heaven is seed." "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of Truth is come, He will guide you into all truth." "For this cause

was I born, for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." So spake the Son of man. Clear as is his vision of the truth men need, he claims for that vision no finality. There are things he does not know. There are questions he will not attempt to answer. He has no creed to offer men. He is a sower sent from God to sow seed — seed that he is confident will grow to a vast harvest, will spread as yeast spreads in the flour.

My friends, these are Christian commonplaces that need to be repeated to-day. They have been too often forgotten and ignored. This Jesus has no sacred vessel ready to contain and protect the precious seed of the truth that he sees and sows. Its life and future depend on its own divine vitality and the fittedness of the soil into which it falls. He is no ecclesiastic. The vision of the truth that he saw, the things he said about men and about God, were living seeds, indeed. They fell, they rooted themselves, they grew to beauty and

to harvest. They affected men profoundly. They came to be held as God's most precious gift to man, his child; and since this was so, human love and faith could do no less than surround its treasure with the fairest treasury wealth could supply, or art plan, and so yet once again, as history repeats itself, were laid the foundations of the mighty ecclesiastical structures of the past: some of them great and old, venerable and beautiful beyond words to the artist's eye, and some very modern and absurd; Roman and Grecian, Anglican and Presbyterian, and "isms" innumerable. Pots, pots, and again pots. The old story of the pot. The best poor human love, faith, and wit could do, with the things it had at hand, to deck and preserve the holy seed it would give, and often did give, its very life for; yet one and all of them, the ancient and beautiful, or modern and grotesque, doomed in the very nature of things to disuse and decay.

For each age, God-hungry, turns from the flesh-pots of its Egypt to the best idea of God

it can win, and following that idea, so is led through its own wilderness, follows its own pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night, wrestles with its plagues, beats back its enemies, and spite of all its losses, struggles, struggles onward, towards the distant Canaan where it would be. Each age leaves to the future the story of its struggle, the precious symbols of its victories, the battle standards round which its hopes and beliefs rallied, and made good their stand.

But old banners that were waved in the victories of long ago may lead us to defeat to-day. The brazen serpent that was the symbol and guarantee of divine deliverance to one generation may become the accursed idol of the next. It is the duty of Moses to hold it aloft. No less it is the duty of Joshua to grind it to powder. For, ah! the ideals of one generation do often become the idols of the next—*poor plaster casts of God*, fit only to be broken and thrown away.

Do not let me be misunderstood. I am not denying the need, in their proper place, of

all those religious constructions that grew, and grow of necessity, round any and all precious truth-winnings of mankind, useful and necessary for a time in giving expression to man's most vital part, his religious instinct; needful as are all bodies to house temporarily all souls, but not to be regarded by any means as complete and final expressions of the soul of truth they temporarily protect, or of the divine life they partially express and explain. No; I would but emphasize again the fact that, while creeds, dogmas, sacred writings, religious ordinances, etc., may be locally and temporarily of great importance, they are at best but *pots*, whose sole use is to protect the seed of life; blundering, imperfect attempts in terms of the *finite to explain the Infinite.* They are not, however venerable, of the nature of the seed itself. Truth needs them, and *outgrows* them; seeking ever newer forms, which again in their turn must inevitably be outgrown.

We see through a glass darkly; we see in no other way. We know in part, and the

wisest and best, not even the Master himself, have ever known or seen in any other way. For if there is a God at all, he certainly is Infinite, and we, though we be his real children, sparks cast forth by the sun of his being, know ourselves sadly to be finite and limited, indeed.

In Jesus I believe the Infinite drew as near to man as Infinity might draw to finitude. I mean by that that our race may never hope to see any one more full of God, more truly divine, than was the man, Christ Jesus. And if this be true, then in Jesus' life and teaching and character, seen and studied rationally, must be found all that manhood in its best flower can in its present stage of being know or reveal of God.

I think a study of Jesus leads to such a conclusion. This undoubtedly was Jesus' own view of his person and mission. He believed that the age-long conviction, so firmly embedded in his race, was divinely implanted; that in the changing phases of its existence his nation had guarded, held in trust for man-

kind, a revelation of the one true God and Father of all; that tribal life and tabernacle worship, and then temple and statelier ritual, all expressed God, all were aids — crutches, as it were, to help lame humanity to God; that Jewish poets and prophets spake as they were moved by the same everlasting Holy Spirit, that more fully, more humanly, more intimately, spake in him; and that when his work should have been accomplished, that same eternal voice would surely continue to guide into a clearer daylight the steps of men whose wills were right with God.

In this sense, then, Jesus himself was careful not to claim *finality* for his teaching. There he differed from other great religious reformers. He was a sower of seed. He gave men a *living principle, not a golden brick.* Nay, he himself was but a seed cast into the ground, and his dying was, in his view, necessary, "for unless seed fall into the ground and die, it remaineth alone."

I venture to think that this teaching of the Son of man has never received, at the

churches' hands, the recognition its profound importance deserves. It is the quality of expansiveness in it, the capacity to change, to grow with man's growing life, which constitutes its profound reasonableness.

Other religions have done vast good for a time. But they have been locally adapted, and so, having met the needs of a certain race or certain epoch only, with that race or epoch they were doomed to decay. But this Gospel of the Son of man, this Gospel of the seed, is an expanding gospel, sure to grow and advance with the life of the race which it both comforts and explains — sure in time to become actually what it claims to be, the religion of the wide world.

III

JESUS' DOCTRINE OF THE SEED (*continued*)

Jesus said, "So is the Kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; . . . and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself." — Mark IV, 26–28.

ONE of the commonest and most misleading mistakes made by that multitude of good Christian people, who have had no time or inclination seriously to study the religion they heartily accept, is that of supposing that the Christianity they, without much thought, have accepted, has come to them practically unchanged from the earliest days, — that the doctrines they hold were always held by believers — were held as they hold them to-day, — that in defending these, in protesting against any change in them, they are standing for the truth; and that those who advocate restatement are bent on destroying the fabric of the faith. Of course this is far from the

truth. Practically universal scholarship admits to-day that orthodox Christianity has undergone quite extraordinary transformations. I have pointed out this fact to you before. I must still at some length insist on it, for to forget it, to deny it, must lead to endless confusion, misunderstanding, and error.

As a matter of fact, those who advocate change are often most truly conservative. They are seeking only to draw the faith and hope of their fellows back to those higher standards, the truer concepts of an earlier day — are actually imitating Jesus himself. For what did Jesus do? He set himself to rescue from its mistaken guardians and teachers the truth his Heavenly Father had given to men; that revelation had been covered out of sight, made of none effect through their added traditions, perverted by their sophistry, denied and falsified by their custom, till in their keeping the house of God had indeed become a den of thieves.

After the Master's death — when Pentecost's power was on them — the twelve disciples

and their company went everywhere preaching his word. Signs and wonders were wrought by them in his name. They literally accomplished in a day what in all his ministry he had failed to accomplish. Thousands believed and went forth to life's tasks, rejoicing in a new hope, where before a little company had but doubtingly followed.

But this first band of saved and inspired men had their own work to do. It was to preach. They were not historians. The needs of the far future were not visible to them. The immediate present was their care. They spoke, they toiled, but they did not write. They were not fitted for writing.

There were others — their followers — who had learned at second-hand from them about Jesus. These naturally began to make some record of the gospel story, and on their every page the divine glow of a vital inspiration forever remains. There were still others, such as the unknown authors of the Epistle to the Hebrews, or of the Apocalypse, whose evident inspiration is of almost as high an order as

that of their teachers themselves. Who can deny the height and glory of the spiritual standard they attain? We know not their names, yet the very fact that such writings and several others by unknown hands should have survived to our time, and should have won a deserved place in the canon, proves conclusively how wonderful was the spiritual life and enthusiasm Jesus breathed into the hearts of those men who companioned with him during his ministry, or who came later under the immediate influence of those who had done so. The divine glow was, indeed, wonderful, but it was brief.

There can be no possible doubt in our minds as to what Jesus' message was as we read the Synoptic Gospels, or the writings of Paul, or even as we study the Johannine philosophy that based itself on that message. Differences of interpretation are already evident, of course, even among these earliest witnesses, but only such differences as witness most naturally to the spiritual honesty that filled them all.

But soon there was a change, and before

three centuries had passed, change had given way to transformation. The emphasis was no longer on what the Master taught. The church that called itself by his name was feeling its way toward the assertion of claims that he denied, and that his apostles abhorred.

He and they had pleaded with men to walk as children of God. But to walk as children of God was soon to mean a totally different thing—namely, to walk in obedience to an ecclesiastical authority. He had no thought of creed, but now the greatest metaphysicians of that or of any age bent their Grecian genius to the formulating of a vast literature of dogma, which only the learned could understand, but which all were enjoined to receive.

Next we see arise a Militant Papacy, steadily replacing the free and simple idealism of Jesus by its "imperial, ecclesiastical, paternal, benevolent tyranny." "My kingdom is not of this world," said the dying Christ. "Nay, but in thy high name I claim and take the kingdoms of this world," cried ever victorious Rome. And long centuries were to pass be-

fore this falsest of all claims made on behalf of the Christian religion was, in the name of the common rights of man, repudiated. Alas! even yet Rome's fatal insistence on it has distracted France, and numbs and blights religious life in Catholic Europe.

No, indeed, the religion that is ours bears everywhere the marks of inevitable change and growth; whether for evil or for good, whether our judgment approves these changes or no, let us recognize them. Especially let us, who are Americans, remember that Protestantism, in some branch of which most of us have been brought up, is responsible for its full share of changes wrought. The fact that it made a sacred book its oracle, when it refused obedience to the Roman primacy, could not save the Protestant movement from the law of growth and change. Protestantism had to be. It was the legitimate child of the Renaissance. The flush of new light, the tide of new learning that swept over the Western world, resulted in the breaking of all manner of sacred "pots," the bursting of venerable wine-skins.

Protestantism saw clearly enough that the true throne of the Father God must be the mind of man; that the final seal of divine authority could be nowhere else than in the mind of man. Protestantism was, on its spiritual side at least (and it had other sides), the re-assertion — almost the re-discovery — of the very core of Jesus' gospel. "Verily I say to you the hour cometh when neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem shall ye worship the Father. God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. For the Father seeketh such to worship him." It therefore put the pope and the priest in their right place. Temples, to the Protestant, were but pictures of the temple of the universe; sacrifices, but symbols of the divine order of the world; priests, but human tokens of, and witnesses to, what man's life of glad service was meant to be.

At least logically Protestantism should have held this ground. But the long custom of the ages was too much for it. The movement dared not trust itself to the impulse and direc-

tion of the Divine Spirit. It too sought to establish a final court of religious appeal other than Christ had established. Rome had proved herself self-seeking and false — a blind leader of the blind. Western civilization turned from her to the sacred writings, rejected her absolutism, and created a new absolutism of the Bible.

It is hard to see what other course the reformers of the sixteenth century could have pursued. All Christendom had been trained to believe that the Bible was a verbally inspired book. Those who parted company with Rome rejected her interpretation of it, denounced her for her denial of the book to the laity, for her sophistifications, misrepresentations, and perversions of its plainest teachings. But of its value and its authority they were fully convinced.

Neither had Protestants grasped the mighty doctrine of the "*seed*." The law of change, of expansion, of growth, had been rendered odious to them, since Rome had abused it to crush freedom and enslave the human mind. The one desire of her best leaders was to get

back to where the early Church had been; to sit at the Master's feet; to stand, clothed with Pentecost's persuading, inspiring power, by his empty grave.

Who to-day shall deny the essential nobility of that ideal? It gave new hope to men of courage and learning. It consecrated the cradle of the modern spirit. It baptized science into the name of Jesus. And yet I think all will admit that Protestantism, as a final expression of Christ's religion, has failed. It had its day. It did its work, just as well, and no better than have other religious movements. It was the best thing men saw at the time. It expressed the highest, the truest they knew, but in its bosom it carried the seeds of its own decay. The ultimate appeal was to a sacred book, and a book — no matter how wonderful — is no living thing. It can but express the ideas of the men who wrote it. It must bear everywhere the marks of human finality and limitation. The mind of man refuses to be bound. It ranges the universe; lifts itself to the stars; is ever hungry for God; seeks him

in the present; hopes for him in the future; rightly refuses any creed that binds it to the past. If he is, he is self-revealing. If we are his children, then to us he must speak. He spoke to our fathers, and in his spoken word to them we rejoice; but their wanderings are over — ours are but begun. Their questions are answered; ours press sorely on us for answer. A God truly to help in time of need must ever inspire and help that time. A living age demands a living God, and if it revolts from the false leadership of a Roman priest who has proved to reasonable men that he has made the truth of God of none effect to them by his traditions, it cannot (let it try never so patiently) find the satisfaction and guidance it needs in the pages of a book, however sacred, the records of a literature, however glorious.

Here was the Protestant quandary. Rome had adopted the right idea. Rome had always set herself to expand; had changed with the changing times; and had during the dark centuries been a rallying-point against despair,

and an immense power for good in the world. She had truly declared that the voice of God must ever be a living voice — God speaking through living men. So far, and in principle, she was evolutionary; she had the ages on her side; she was right. Her error lay not in her theory, but in her practice. Popular Protestantism confounded these two, and, moved by a not unreasonable wrath against what Rome had accomplished, set aside as mistaken both her theory and her practice. I say moved by a not unreasonable wrath, for remember, the Reformation movement in Germany, in Switzerland, and in England, was largely influenced by men smarting under a sense of bitter wrong. The awful Christlessness of Rome's practice naturally led the revolting people to abhor and refuse the precepts by which she had justified it.

Here let me digress for a moment. Mark you, my friends, this protest against the ways of Rome is no outworn protest that has lost its meaning and its vigor because the protesters who voiced the great revolt of Reformation

times made many and great mistakes themselves, and were succeeded by others who added crime to mistake. No, with new insistence, backed by new witnesses, it is sure to rise and rise again. History is opening its half-forgotten, partially understood page to the modern scholar, and the verdict of history on Rome's ways and policies, past and present, cannot be mistaken, cannot be ignored. Where she has had power undivided, unchecked, she has crushed out liberty and truth, she has set back civilization, she has refused the very bread of life to her most faithful children. The awful story of her doings in Spain is yet but partially known,[1] but age-long betrayal of the great French people is beginning to be understood in France, though it is not yet appreciated outside its borders.

[1] In 1522, the year in which Luther was summoned to the Diet of Worms, Ignatius Loyola published the only book he ever wrote, his *Spiritual Exercises*. The book was intended as a devotional guide for those who would enter his order of the Society of Jesus. In the concluding rules of the exercise, Loyola says: "Laying aside all private judgment, we ought to obey in all things the Hierarchical Church; to praise confession, to praise the frequent hearing of the mass, to praise

Rome betrayed, oppressed, and slaughtered, for five hundred long years, the Puritans of France, and France was the cradle of Puritanism. Three hundred years before English Wycliffe preached and printed, Puritanism had its birth in Southern France. Like all great movements, it had its faults, its excesses, its limitations. But making full allowance for them all, Puritanism in France and anywhere else mightily strove for those invaluable human rights and duties, in the exercise of which alone do nations rise to greatness and men ripen to character.

Rome set herself to stamp into the soil whence it sprang, this most vital seed of progress. She was not strong enough to do it

the religious orders and the vows of religion, to praise the relics of saints, to praise the fasts and penances, to praise the buildings and ornaments, always to defend, and never to impugn, the precepts of the Church, to approve the constitutions, recommendations, and habits of life of our superiors, *whether praiseworthy or not*, for to speak against them before the lower classes would give rise to murmurs and scandal, and thus the people would be irritated against their temporal or spiritual rulers; to praise scholastic theology, *to hold that we believe what seems to us white to be black, if the Hierarchical Church so defines it.*" This was Jesuitry, and it ruined Spain.

alone, and cunningly she set herself to wheedle and seduce the Kings of France to aid in the crusade. The scattered political units that were to make the great French nation of the future had not yet been welded to unity. She would help the central power to an absolute dominion, on the condition that Puritan heresy was utterly destroyed. And so the knife of the butcher was blessed by the vice-regent of God, and bloody work began that was to go on, with slight intermission, for almost five hundred years, till the final blow, the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, fell. If the secular powers of France sickened, as they often did, of the job, Rome stood ever ready, lending her superb ecclesiastical machinery to aid the crown in the consolidation of its powers; lifting the throne of France to a yet more autocratic authority.

This devil's work, as I say, went on for centuries, while slowly the best life-blood of a great nation was drained away. Europe, fully occupied with its own affairs, dominated by the Papacy, did not interfere. It was easy to

pervert the issue and disarm such weak and ineffectual sympathy as might arise outside the French border. So at last Rome was supreme, the French kings could debauch France and plunder her at their will; and Puritanism died in the breach or at the stake, or went over-seas, to help make rival nations such as England and Holland great, and, in time, America free.

Then at last retribution came. Those forces, making for all that moderation and constitutionalism mean, had been forbidden place in France, and France herself must pay the price. Innocent and guilty — that is the law — must suffer together, and red revolution must write, with dripping finger, on the fairest churches piety had ever raised to the worship of God, Christianity's own forgotten motto, that since 1170 had in France been denied and blasphemed — Liberty, Fraternity, Equality. Ah, yes, and the end is not yet.

These doings of Rome meant a great deal to the fathers of the Reformation. The mistake they made was natural, but for Protestantism it was a fatal mistake. It rejected Roman

authority. It denied that any man or group of men were alone and before all others ordained and empowered to express and proclaim the very truth of Eternal God, were his vice-regents on earth. It was high time to protest against the leadership of Rome. Popery had proved itself a false leader, a blind guide. The Vatican had failed the cause of truth, had suppressed and strangled the seed, as effectually as had the Pharisees and scribes of our Lord's day. And the crime was of deeper dye than theirs, for heavily and darkly her hands were stained with blood. The time for protest was, indeed, fully come. But it was a grave mistake for those great protesters to seek to place the Bible in the Vatican's place.

Once the Protestant leaders had definitely broken with Rome, they in their turn found themselves confronted with the age-long problem that no religious organization had ever solved. They must recast the truth as they saw it, for the new time; strip its teachings of gloss and sophistry, and sow a fresh, pure seed, give forth fresh, wholesome bread for

the food of man. What Buddhist priest, Jewish scribe, Roman council had failed to do, Protestant synods in their turn must attempt. They of course failed, but who shall wonder at their failure. It was failure to recognize and heartily accept the essential nature of Christ's doctrine of the seed — *the evolutionary nature of the truth.*

Protestantism does not need here, or from me, defence or vindication. What is good in us, what is of final value in our institutions, is largely owing to what its great leaders and martyrs thought, did, and suffered, and we are not likely to forget it or be ashamed to own our debt. But to pretend that as a religious system, acceptable to thoughtful men, it satisfies our needs, answers our questions, or promises a reasonable guidance for the future, I think very few are prepared to do. In our dissatisfaction with the religious aspects of Protestant churches to-day, let us at least ever keep before our eyes the fact of the greatness of our debt to that world movement from which they sprang. Those men of the six-

teenth century relit the torch of truth when it was well-nigh quenched in the thick darkness. Where they held their own, first in the school and university, and then on bloody battle-field, the seed grew. Liberty and civilization took root, and the nations prospered. Where they failed partially, progress was at least retarded, and came slowly, if it came at all. Where they were slaughtered, where in tens of thousands they were burned, as in Spain, darkness and tyranny took up their abode. Men gave up hope then, and are giving up God now.

Some who have kindly listened to me so far may say that I have unduly emphasized man's religious failure to attain any standard approaching that which Jesus established. Let me try to make clear that such has not been my intention. I hold, on the other hand, that we are all too much inclined to undervalue the progress that has been made towards his ideal, in the religious life that has been won; that we dwell with too faint a heart on the spectacle of moral failure and hesitating advance.

On the whole, man's religious sense grows and does not decay.

For like a child sent with a flickering light
To find his way across a dusky night,
Man walks the world.
Again and yet again, the lamp must be by gusts of passion slain.
But shall not He that sent him from the door
Relight the lamp once more and yet once more?

But the path of religious progress is ever a zigzag path. It has never been in the nature of a straight line. We are quicker to see our forefathers' crimes than their virtues, because our own heightened sense of moral obligation prevents often a fair comparison between our moral standards and theirs, while the dimness and imperfection of our best historic knowledge prevents our valuing, as we should, the ideals they strove to attain. Their best may not have been what seems to us best. What seemed to them reasonable, the means they took to reach it, we may think mistaken or immoral. But surely this is often because we fail to put ourselves back in those remote times. Had we been where and what they were, we should

have done as they. In all ages since man became a religious being, he has on the whole striven to *give the best he has to the best he knows,* and I know no better definition of religion than that.

Of course we must admit that "the best men knew" often differed not only in degree, but in kind, from the Gospel of Jesus; that its identification with that gospel made Christ's message temporarily of none effect to man; nay, that often its mistaken professors used their perverted Christian ideas to accomplish ends, to justify means, abhorrent to the Master. So much is undoubtedly true. Yet since into the mind of man the seed of the kingdom had fallen, — fallen, as the great Seedsman said, often seemingly in vain, fallen on rock and thorn and highway, yet fallen, too, here and there on good ground, — through all the changes and chances of our mortal life, it must ever somewhere spring. In the wide field of humanity it must appear and reappear, for he who sowed said its destiny was to live and never altogether to die.

I am persuaded that we must grasp this sublime truth to-day if we are to go forth to life's tasks in a spirit of joy and confidence, and not of doubt or despair. What warrant have we for believing that in this, our half-instructed time, we can know anything approximating to all the truth about Jesus or his nature or his message that is yet to be known? Why should we imagine that we can do what no generation before us has done — free ourselves from our prejudices and our selfishnesses, and so yield a completely intelligent and perfect obedience to the divine Son of man? To fancy for a moment that such a service is possible to us would be to convict ourselves of blindest Phariseeism; would be to claim for ourselves a singleness of eye, a purity of vision that no inspired apostle dared to claim. No; at best we can but hope, with good intention, to give to him who is altogether worthy, who is indeed the incarnation and summing-up of the highest we know, the poor best that is ours to give.

I have dwelt on the past, because imperfect

as is our knowledge of it such knowledge surely tends to comfort and encourage us and not to depress. If we are uncertain and doubtful of many things, the great ones that strove before us were at least as uncertain, and where they cast aside all uncertainty, they were often farthest from the truth. When they were most positive they were often most wrong. Yet the sum total of it all makes, and has made, for good.

It is not so long ago since the fashion of an hour denounced Christianity, denied the good of religion, on the ground that many of the monstrous crimes of the past — its tyrannies, its blood-shedding — were done in its name. Historic science to-day admits the facts, but repudiates the conclusions drawn from them.

Cruel and tyrannous men there have been, there will yet be, for human nature rises but slowly from the original beast. But the gentleness, the holiness, the sublime wisdom and self-sacrifice of the religion of Jesus has in darkest times modified the beast in man, even

where it has been powerless to eradicate it. And so to go back to my definition of religion. So long as even the beast, at times, felt he should bring the best within him to the best that was far above him, he was the less a bad man, the less tyrannous neighbor, for even the temporary effort.

Jesus set the standard, and to the standard all good men have repaired and will repair. Yes; so far as Christendom's past is visible to us, we can see its greatest personalities so coming. We can sometimes note their mistakes. We can guess at least at the temporary or permanent value of the offerings they bring, the additions they make to the treasure house of their God.

Even a cursory glance, then, at religious history is enough to make it evident that the Christian doctrines most of us were brought up to believe without question have undergone constant and radical change; that our religion as we received it from our fathers was a very different thing from the religion Jesus sought to teach his disciples, and which they in their

turn sowed among men. When we reject parts of it, when we try to make our own additions to it, when we seek to conform it to what this new day has brought us of truth, we are only doing what all good men have done before us — we are honoring and not dishonoring the gospel we love; *we are following our great Master in the very way he bade us follow him; we are doing just what he told us to do,* trusting to the light and help of the Spirit, whose inspiring guidance he promised should not fail humanity till the end of the ages.

Now, further, I want to remind you that this process of growth and change is already unmistakably present in the earliest years of the first century. Many learned writers have pointed this out. I only briefly refer to it as a quite unanswerable evidence of the acceptance, sometimes it may be unconscious, by the greatest of the early Christian teachers, of Jesus' doctrine of the seed.

Even a casual reader of the Bible cannot fail to notice the difference between the writ-

ings of Paul and the recorded sayings of Jesus. Without contradiction we may claim the Apostle to the Gentiles as the greatest re-sower of the seed in the first century. Where did Paul get his doctrine? Some have supposed that he received from the apostles instruction in the teachings of Jesus, and from these developed his system. Paul himself denies this. He explicitly disclaims any such proceeding. "I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." [1] So confident was he of his own inspiration that he even withstood Peter, claiming that his own teaching and practice on an important question was after the mind of Christ, and that the elder apostle had yielded sinfully to the legalists. Whether Paul was right or wrong in his contention is of but secondary importance. What is of quite first importance is the ground he took in defending his position. It was that the gospel was so liv-

[1] See Gal. 1, 11 and 12.

ing, so comprehensive that all men seeking the truth, Gentiles as well as Jews, had in it equal part. The fact that Jesus himself had confined his mission to the lost sheep of the house of Israel does not seem to have caused the Apostle to the Gentiles any hesitation in throwing wide the doors of the early Church to the world. He was right. He was truly inspired. *But his was the inspiration of a radical*, of an evolutionist.

So in his slowly formulated doctrines of justification by faith, of sacrifice, and of atonement, Paul is bent on welding together rabbinical thinking and Jewish law, in which his whole mind is steeped, with the teachings of his new-found Master, to whom his whole heart is given. Before all things, he is impressed with Jesus' attitude to the past. "I am not come to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil." And so plainly before him rises his lifework. What can Paul do better than explain the old sacrificial system of the Jews as fulfilled in the dying of the Saviour?

St. Paul's aim was a true aim. He gave the

best he had to the best he knew, and for long centuries a great part of Christendom was destined to take his teachings as the final word. But new light has come with new times. Sacrifice, as the law of our universe, means a wider, deeper, more universal thing to-day than it ever did before. Atonement, substitution, justification are no longer the burning questions that once they were, and this lonely little man, who stamped our religion with his tremendous personality, as none but the Master ever did, cannot help us to-day as that Master himself can help. So much may be admitted, yet never can we over-pay the debt we owe to St. Paul. The universal law of sacrifice which Jesus taught and illustrated is a far higher law than the Pauline conception of it, but Paul's genius gave to his own and to succeeding times the clearest and highest rendering of that law which men could *then* understand. And yet the living seed must in time outgrow and crack all pots—even the apostolic pots; even the Pauline pot.

After Paul's day men went everywhere

sowing the word, and the seed fell on Grecian ground, and Grecian metaphysician and philosopher received it gladly. With them, too, it sprang up and bore fruit. They must give the best they had to this last, best life that had come to them. For centuries, then, the supremest creed-makers who ever lived had their way. In terms of human reason they set themselves to explain the Infinite, to justify the ways of God to men. The task they set themselves was an impossible task, yet could they have attempted no other, for for it they were supremely fitted. Of this much I think we may be sure; where they gloriously failed, none may ever hope to succeed. The great creed-makers had their day. They spared neither themselves nor those who differed from them. They help us to know rather what the Christianity of the future cannot be than what it can be.

Then it was the turn of the practical men of the world to shape the new religion to practical ends. As Roman power trembled to its fall, men who had come to regard Roman

law and rule as the world's only safeguards against anarchy looked on all sides to find some shelter from the coming storm. The hordes that threatened from across the frontier had been largely Christianized; why was it not then possible to bind the mistress of the nations and her younger rebellious children together, by a kindlier and more enduring tie than any which Roman despotism had ever conceived of? *It was a grand dream.*

And so arose the idea of the universal Roman Church, paramount to all temporal power. The Lex Romana had held civilization together for so long, men had grown so accustomed to one central power, that any division of ultimate authority seemed well-nigh impossible. If under an inferior law, if subject to an often brutal code, human progress had been so marked and general peace and prosperity had proved so stable, to what high ends might not mankind attain if the vicar of Christ ascended the throne of the Cæsars, and councils of holy bishops met to decide between nation and nation? Thus came temporal power to the Central

Roman See — not so much a thing grasped at by any pontiff as a duty forced on the Church by the dire needs of a distracted time.

Again good men brought the best they had to the best they knew. And had they done otherwise, the dark ages that followed would probably have been darker than they were.

Let me refer to one movement in those dark ages that very plainly illustrates the truth I would press on you — the Crusades. That these caused much blood-shedding cannot be denied. They were of their time, and the times were superstitious and cruel. The Sepulchre was sacred. The spirit of him who rose from it was often denied or unknown. Yet surely it was better far that the feudal tyrant should believe that there was something worth dying for besides his ill-gotten hoard, and that that sacred thing was the cradle of his religion, than that he should stay at home, to wage ceaseless war on his neighbors.

Practically the crusader may have been often little better than a heathen knight who

worshipped his own bloody sword. Yet when he raised aloft its iron hilt, and on its crude cross swore the oath that bound him to long exile and often to death, he was on the way to be a better man, and he certainly was destined, though he knew it not, to bring back to Europe the seeds of enlightenment and learning. By taking the cross, unwittingly he accomplished a greater thing than he aimed at when he would have wrested the Sepulchre from the Saracen. He brought East and West together, opened new ways for commerce and for learning, and incidentally the worst of his band helped the future by laying down their lives to uphold the past.

The crusader knew nothing of the spirit of pity or toleration. We, to whom toleration is a commonplace, forget how slowly it spread among men, forget how long and dark were the ages during which even to the saintly it was almost unknown. Though he was of his time and lacked pity, the crusader was often truly and profoundly religious. Simon de Montfort, leader of the wholly unjust crusade

against the French Puritan Albigenses in 1220, is busy slaughtering the heretics, men, women, and children. Before leading an assault on an Albigensian stronghold, he according to custom will attend mass. As the mailed knight kneels in prayer, a squire rushes to his side and hurriedly whispers that a desperate sortie has been made by the garrison, and that the immense wooden machinery of his attack is in imminent danger of total destruction. He must come at once, or all will be lost. Still kneeling, unmoved, the iron-headed man replies, "I cannot come till I have looked on my Christ." Here is the crusading spirit, perhaps, at its best. It knows nothing of pity; to it toleration is a sin; but even the cruel devastator's religion is the giving of the best he has to the best he knows. His cross is a sword hilt, but it is a real cross all the same.

Yes; each age marks and moulds the seed truth as it sees it, marks it after its own likeness, till to our eyes often all the beauty and worth of it are lost. But it is not so. For lo,

in some mysterious way the very next age finds some new expression for it, sees a new hope, follows a new light. The seed is not dead, but, as the Master foretold, has been re-sown. The soil and climate condition the growth of the seed; they do not create it. Its innermost life is a thing apart from them. It uses them rather than they it. *The inner vitality of the God seed in us all is the insoluble mystery and glory of life.*

It would be interesting and instructive to follow further this line of thought; to point out how, in each successive movement of human advance since the days of St. Paul, the ideals that dominated men, whether intellectual or political, profoundly controlled and altered their creeds. As, for instance, the grand dream of the temporal power faded, as successive pontiffs proved themselves no better rulers than the emperors had been, man's irrepressible faith again fixes its eye on the throne. In it surely dwelt something of a divine right, and the brave souls that rallied to defend its lost cause, against the rising tide of Puritan de-

mocracy, fought as much for a religious as for a political faith.

So down to our own time. Many who long ago cast aside as an ancient fable the belief in the divine right of kings to rule, still stoutly hold to their fathers' confidence in the divine right of priests to mediate: one doctrine as visionary as the other. Both of them are but shadowy hints of the great truths behind them, namely, the divine right of man to rule himself, and his equally divine right to come to God for himself. At infinite cost these have been won. But the understanding and application of them to character and society is not yet.

Meanwhile to each is given as much truth as he can take — to each age as much light as it can obey.

Is not the wide air, after the cocoon,
As much God as the moth-soul can receive?
Doth not God give the child within the womb
Some guess to set him groping for the world,
Some blurred reflection answering his desire?

We, shut in this blue womb of the doming sky,
Guess and grope dimly for the vast of God,

And, eyeless, through some vague, less perfect sense,
Strive for a sign of what it is to see.

Christ's doctrine, then, as we know and profess it, has not come to us without enduring many and radical changes, and can only remain a vital and real thing to us by reason of more and continuous change. If in the first instance it was miraculously given (and I do not say it was, for here I use the word "miraculous" in its scientific sense), it certainly was not miraculously preserved. When Jesus had spoken of what was to follow his sowing, he seems carefully to avoid the idea that any specially miraculous interference was to be expected or desired on that seed's behalf. Some was to fall on good ground, and greatly succeed. Some was to be almost choked to death by worldly influences. And yet some more was quite to fail — evil birds were to carry it away. Then he adds that its growing depended on and was nourished by the normal influences of the earth receiving it: earth, that makes things grow "we know not how." Such was the Master's forecast, and has not history ab-

solutely fulfilled it? Things have but fallen out as he foreknew. For all the changes that have passed on it, his word is still the very seed of life to us to-day; our guide to duty-doing here, our hope for large worthiness elsewhere. Firmly, reasonably, I think, we may believe that more, and not less, of Jesus Christ is visible to men to-day. We are nearer him, we see him — not clearly, it is true, but less indistinctly than those of bygone times. In spite of all the intervening ages, in spite of all the inevitable confusions and distortions of human thinking, though strange claims have been made for him and terrible deeds done in his holy name, still the real man, Christ Jesus, remains "the chief among ten thousand and the altogether lovely."

Human thought has perhaps concentrated itself on him, more than on all the other sons of men put together. Sometimes it has ignored him, but not for long; next it has acclaimed him; but whether from the coverings of neglect or the robes of royalty, Jesus emerges the same: the complete Son of man, who knows

what is in man, and reveals what is in God. This and nothing less is the historic truth of the matter. We know nothing in human story like it. It is the real miracle of Jesus.

I have tried to show you that what is handed forth to us as his doctrine to-day is in large part not his at all. I have done this not by seeking to disprove, point by point, those many orthodox positions on which still totteringly stand the churches of to-day; but rather by indicating the long and devious processes by which religious thought has come down to our time, processes that from their very nature make it impossible that Christian truth, as we have received it, could be undefiled.

A great river may, clear and pure, burst from its mountain home, but it has a long journey to make before it gains the sea. On that journey it loses its first glorious Alpine rush as it traverses the plain. Other streams join it and add to its volume. It takes tribute from the marsh land as well as from the sunny meadow. After the great city is passed, its tide is dank and foul. Yet, as Kingsley so

beautifully sang, there is a very divine quality of self-cleansing in the river, and so most true it is that "it cleanses its stream as it hurries along to the calling sea."

The river's story is the story of human life's endeavor. Truth is revealed to man as the river comes: at times purer than at others; at times so befouled in flow that it seems to carry only death on its dark current. Then once again obeying its law of self-purging, and almost free from stain and soilure, its mighty volume brings with it only fertility and joy. Then truly it seems to be the river that the writer of the Revelation saw in his immortal vision: "A river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb."

IV

THE NATURALNESS AND SUPERNATURALNESS OF JESUS

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do. — John xiv, 12.

I said in my last lecture that what mankind greatly values it will fiercely guard. This is a commonplace, of course, yet men have failed often to make allowance for some results that have arisen from this most natural human predisposition. They have been startled and dismayed when the bars and barriers their predecessors have painfully built round their religious treasure houses came tumbling down. They have then bewailed the loss of what they most have prized, and fiercely they turn on the reformers, and believe, as Mary did in the dim light of that first Easter morning, that these have taken away their Lord. Religious defences cost the builders much to put

up. In the nature of things they must cost something to take down when the time to take them down arrives.

Supernaturalism is a comprehensive sort of word, and might perhaps be taken as an explanation of much of our religious barrage and defence. Even the merest outline of the genesis and growth of belief in the supernatural is quite beyond the scope of these modest lectures, but I would point to the historic fact that the great world religions are all alike in claiming a supernatural origin, and in insisting, moreover, that the supernatural quality is a test of the value of religion. In early days it could not be otherwise. The world men lived in was a pretty rough, hard world. Light and darkness, evil and good, seemed to carry on an evenly balanced struggle, and none might confidently foretell the outcome.

"If God is a power of light and goodness, let him prove himself such. If he cares for man in his lonely up-hill striving, let him show some sign of caring. If among earth's tumultuous voices he speaks, let it be in tones

of compelling power, so that even the doubting and hesitating may be forced to hear and obey." Naturally, religious passion cried out for a supernaturally self-revealing God, and, ah, which of us does not know well how deeply, hungrily, in our heart of hearts we crave still the God who comes to us by way of "*the sign*"?

Once the supernaturally revealed God has spoken, a new reason for the continuous display of the supernatural arises as a matter of course. What has been communicated is a matter of life and death in its supreme importance. It must be guarded. It must be preserved. The gift to man is vain if it be not maintained and continued. So naturally and very soon something of the mystery and supernatural nature of the revelation comes to be attached to the means that are adopted for its preservation, and to those chosen as its appointed guardians. All who know anything of church history will remember how constantly such natural, nay, inevitable, developments have occurred. The teachings of the

infancy of Jesus, the doctrine of his virgin birth, and as a logical outwork and defence of that doctrine, the further development of it into the quite modern pronouncement of the Roman Church as to the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary herself, must at once come to mind.

To many truly religious and also thoughtful people such an evolutionary development of the Word and Seed principle of Jesus seems most natural, most necessary. Their place, and it is a large one, is in the great Church of Rome. There are others who, while they recognize that this line of development may have been the most natural one for early Christianity to take, may have indeed been the only possible development, by no means admit that they are necessarily bound to accept its conclusions. It belonged to a time very different from our own. It was based on views of nature, of history, and of man that were temporary and misleading. They find no ground for it in the teachings of Jesus himself, no trace of it in the undisputed

writings of St. Paul. It outrages their sense of reason, for to accept its conclusions necessarily cuts them off from modern scholarship and bars them from the ways of modern research. If to be a Christian means that a man must accept and confess what is briefly called the supernatural in the Christian religion, then Christians they will not, they cannot be.

I need scarcely say, then, that the question of what is natural and supernatural in the person and teaching of Jesus is one of first importance to-day. Most of us know we are constantly thinking on this question, if we think on religious matters at all. Here the wisest are the first to confess a profound ignorance. They know well that theories commending themselves to reverent scholarship to-day may be replaced by newer and more satisfactory ones to-morrow, as human knowledge pushes its patient way a little further into the vast territories of the unknown. Yet dim as is our light, we cannot stifle enquiry if we would. No uncertainty in our own conclusions, no difference of opinion among our teachers can pre-

vent our pursuit of the great question for ourselves. Why must we, it may be asked, conscious of our pitiful incapacity, insist on occupying ourselves with this problem which admittedly is so much too hard for us? Ah, it is because in our inmost hearts we know that we want Jesus, and that if we are forced to give him up, if he, too, like so many beautiful visions of the early days, is doomed to fade away in the stern light of actuality, then with him goes from us forever what has been most beautiful and inspiring in human life.

Now the Saviour Jesus presented to most of you in boyhood was, we must admit, crudely supernatural. It was his unlikeness to us, not his unity with us, that was usually insisted upon. His supernaturalness, not his naturalness. And now that most educated men can no longer believe in the supernatural, the Jesus who to them in their youth was ever presented clothed in the supernatural is becoming a faded figure, a less real personality. Whether we wish it or not therefore, we must, if we would hold him fast, ask, How far was the real Jesus

supernatural? Does he claim supernatural powers? Did the supernatural in his days mean to men what it has come to mean to-day?

Whether he was supernatural or not, it must at least be evident to all that before forming an opinion, before taking sides on this great question, we owe it to ourselves first of all to look frankly, and if we can without bias, at his person and environment; at himself, and his times, and his teaching. Only then may we hope to form some not altogether mistaken idea as to what was natural about him, what may be accounted for by ordinary human laws, by circumstances, by the limitations of his time, that are, or should be, well known and recognized; and what in his person and his teachings transcends these.

The supernatural is a moving point. What is inexplicable to one age is plainly explicable to the next. I need not argue this, for so much all will admit. That I should be able to whisper to my friend one thousand miles away would have been deemed a stupendous miracle less than one hundred years ago. It is not

so very long since the, to us, common phenomena of mesmerism, thought transference, and second sight led men and women to torture and death. We forget that while less than four hundred martyrs suffered death in England, Scotland, and Ireland during Mary's reign, over four thousand witches, men, women, and children, too, were burned and drowned in Scotland alone during a comparatively short period. The men who tore Scotland free from Rome were the chief actors in that grim tragedy. Puritan bigotry, not Roman intolerance, was guilty of that insensate folly. In those times, to deny supernaturalism was to court death.

The Jews believed that by miracle the cities of the plain were destroyed. It did not occur, I fancy, to many pious people who were shocked at the awful news of Messina's calamity to attribute to miracle the earthquake and the tidal wave which destroyed a quarter of a million of lives in a few moments.

The reason of this difference is not in the facts recorded, but in our point of view. The

earthquake and its dreadful results are just as much part of the natural order under which we live as is the springing-up in your garden to-day of the myriads of daffodils and hyacinths, that so beautifully deck the lawns. The man of science tells us that the earthquake is caused by the shrinking of the earth crust. We ourselves know that given sun, soil, rain, and seed, and our flower-beds will glow in the springtime. Yet, as a matter of fact, how the bulb grows from its rough brown unsightliness to odorous beauty, and how the awful calamity of the earthquake is prepared, we do not know. One process is as little understood by us as the other. Only we do know that both are according to nature's workings, not against them — are natural, not supernatural.

Jesus was a Jew. His beliefs were those that would in the ordinary course of life come to a profoundly religious Jew. All men of his race and time believed in the supernatural. So did he. I think so much is evident to any careful reader of his recorded sayings and doings. But I think also it is no less certain that as his

brief ministry advanced, he changed, in several important particulars, his views and his message.

Such passages as, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin";[1] and, "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes"[2] seem to me final as to his profound belief in the value of his own miracles. On the other hand, signs are not wanting that towards the end his belief in the value of his miracles lessened. He is officially approached by the Pharisees and scribes, who desire him to show them a sign. "He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of

[1] John xv, 22. [2] Matt. xi, 21.

the times? A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas." [1]

Again, Jesus' complaint, addressed to the multitude who followed him, would seem to indicate that he placed a very real value on his own miracles as means to induce faith (if in this passage the writer of the Fourth Gospel has preserved for us a saying nowhere else recorded): "Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled." [2]

I think, then, on the whole, that the modern theory, commonly advanced, that Jesus attached but secondary importance to his miracles, is an over-statement of the case. He profoundly believed in the supernatural himself. Why should he not? Had he not done so he would have been no real messenger to his time. The apostles after him believed in the supernatural. No reader of the Acts or the Epistles can doubt it. The speech of Peter, on the day

[1] Matt. xvi, 1–4. [2] John vi, 26.

of Pentecost, whether it is reported accurately by St. Luke or not, reproduces without doubt the views of the apostles at that time. The speaker says: "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, . . . ye . . . by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Writing to the Corinthians, some thirty years later, St. Paul places in their order of relative value those who minister in the Church: "God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings." [1]

The testimony, then, of miracles was still highly regarded. Let us recognize this frankly, and as frankly declare that such belief was the natural belief of the time, and had no binding power whatever on us. The supernatural is a movable point.

In this world of ours, man is coming to his own, but he wins his way slowly. For long ages he must have held his cave's mouth with club and stone, against beasts vastly stronger

[1] 1 Cor. xii, 28.

than himself. His tool-wielding hand must have served him well; and when at last he learned the secret of fire, his victory was assured. Even then it was on an unknown and hostile world he fared forth. How little could he know; how much less understand; and any exercise of power that seemed to him, who knew nothing as yet of his own powers, far more than human, was classed as miraculous, — the working of some superior being, beneficent or malevolent, as the case might be.

Experience still supplies us with many things we cannot understand, but we no longer count them as supernatural. Few will deny to-day that back of the phenomena I referred to — mesmerism, thought transference, clairvoyance, etc. — there is something more than fraud. Prophets there have been (and perhaps are) who saw, by gifts we cannot gauge, into the future. Men and women are here to-day whose hands heal, whose touch removes pain. I had a friend — a doctor — who practised in the Northwest years ago when harvesting machinery was new, and when a good many accidents

occurred from its use. Among his neighbors he found a Swedish farmer whose touch was of extraordinary power. My friend assured me that with a few passes he could remove the most violent pain, and that by his aid, and in the rough circumstances of the harvest field, he had performed numerous operations, some of a grave nature. The man was quite ignorant, could not write, made no boast of his powers, and would never receive any compensation for what he did. In other times he would have been worshipped as a saint or burned as a witch.

I stayed more than once in a beautiful suburban home of friends of mine in a Southern city. My hostess, the mother of a large family, suffered at times excruciatingly from pain in the temples. She was for years treated by the ablest medical men in the country, but the pain would return and in so violent a form that her reason seemed threatened; the paroxysms lasting ten to fifteen days. At last it was determined to remove the nerve (a very grave operation, I am told). I personally knew

the great physician that advised this operation as a last resort. Shortly before the day set, Mrs. ——'s maid, a colored woman, said to her, "Why not let the blacksmith of the village see if he could not help her — he was often able to take away pain by rubbing." Mrs. ——'s family agreed. The man came two or three times, and till her death, fifteen years later, I believe Mrs. —— had no return of that pain. Here there are two instances of unaccounted-for powers which have come under my own observation. To deny such phenomena, to ascribe them to fraud, is to be really credulous, really unscientific. There are many things in this our brief life that no philosophy yet formulated by us accounts for or explains. There are around and within us constant signs and evidences of the working of powers we as yet do not understand. But bit by bit we are coming to understand them, coming to find their true place for them, as piece by piece we are surely putting together the puzzle of life.

I do not find myself able to believe all the miracles ascribed to Jesus in the gospels. As

I have showed you, it is not reasonable to suppose that we have in those gospels any historic or accurate account of what actually took place. They are not, they do not pretend to be, history. But I do feel it most natural to believe that Jesus did work convincing miracles in order to commend his message, and far from believing such miracles to be impossible, I do not see how one, like the Son of man, coming at the time he did, and under the circumstances of that time, could be anything else than a miracle worker. Far from believing such miracles impossible, I think it more likely that in time to come, miracles will not offer any real difficulty to the thoughtful, but that our children, or our children's children, may yet see men on the earth who are good enough and great enough to work them.

Miracles as Jesus wrought them were altogether the most beautiful and natural things possible. To think of them as breaks in God's law is illogical and absurd. To think of them as natural operations, wrought by higher good-

ness and higher power working in completer harmony with and understanding of the divine will, seems to me reasonableness itself.

Thus to believe in the resurrection of Jesus is not to disbelieve in the natural order. If death is the extinction of life, and resurrection a new creation of life, resurrection would then seem incredible. But if death be merely the shedding of the body by the spirit, the sort of dying that the seed dies, then resurrection is the springing of the spirit life from the body life, and as in seed sowing, every death is but a resurrection.

We know little about life; it is still a mystery to us. We ourselves but very partially understand ourselves. Surely there are powers latent within us as yet untried, unrecognized. When Jesus stood among men, there was to them revealed a new, an unknown type of man, — one pervious, as man had not yet been pervious, to the light, knowledge, and power of God; *one full of the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb*. His was a will at one with the Father's, a hand clasped in the

Father's hand. Well might his followers cry, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" The ruder earth forces shape matter after an eternal law. These forces we ourselves have proved to be more and more obedient to man, and clearly we men are called to exercise, in the far future, a control on such forces, far greater, far more subtle, than anything we can accomplish to-day.

It seems to me, then, far from unreasonable to believe that Jesus, the uniquely great man, by reason of his perviousness to God, found nature, as he found man, plastic to his hand. Is it not true that we can measure the relative advance each living thing has made in the scales of being, by its relative perviousness to influences outside itself? All life as we know it is veiled from the Infinite Life, and life may be spoken of as of lowly or high order, in proportion to the thinness or thickness of the material veils enfolding it, hanging between it and the Infinite Life.

Here are creatures scarcely alive, we say.

Such life as they have is only apparent to patient study. They seem more vegetable than animal. They live, but their life draws small sustenance from our prime necessities of light and air. From these they are shut in by twenty thousand feet of sunless sea. The depths of the ocean veil them from our life-giving sun. Leaving ages behind us, as we rise in life's scales, we come on other veiled lives, but here the coverings are less opaque and are quickly drawn aside. Still for years many inches of impervious soil must cut the locust's larvæ off from daylight, and years it must pass in its dark earth cradle, before it can spread its wings and sing its brief summer song. The frosts of many a winter, the rains of many a spring, and the persuasive warmth of many a summer day must search for it in the dark soil, for its veil, too, is thick and impervious. This is the way of the coral, the way of the locust, the way of the world. For how did planetary life come to be at all?

Here science speaks with no uncertain voice. She claims authority, and, claiming it, she

makes on us a stupendous demand. She expects us to accept, almost without question, the truth of a miracle so great that I do not hesitate to say all the miracles of revelation are trivial by the side of it. Science teaches us that all the beauty, music, knowledge that go to make up what we understand of life have come out of a swirling, formless hurricane of fiery cosmic matter, and nothing else — out of a chaos so dark and rude, out of a blast so awful and death-dealing, that not even to an educated imagination can its fury be conceivable. In that long æon of chaos, death reigned, not life. Chaos seemed to rule, not order. Then were enthroned powers surely utterly diabolic. Any sane, overlooking intelligence; any man even of genius who from some distant point of vantage might conceivably have surveyed that chaotic storm, could have believed nothing less than that he was hearing and seeing, in its awful confusion and roaring turmoil, nature's articulated curse. In vast spaces, uncontrolled and uncontrollable, the fiery hurricane, with purposeless fury, prom-

ised to rage forever. So ages passed, and were followed by other ages, and some sort of comprehensible order grew, till, in the sublime language of the Bible, in the centre of dense vapor earth lifted herself, but she was "without form and void, and darkness was on the face of the deep." What had love or wisdom to do with such a gray, lifeless world as that?

Then other ages passed, and forth from the ocean depths there came forms of life, grotesque and awful, that lived but to destroy. Then other ages passed, and lo! man at last stood upon his feet. But what a man! Is he a man? If he lifts hands of prayer, they are red with blood. He is dimly aware of his better self, if he is aware. He is surely liker far to the beasts from which he came. Cruel and lustful is he; living on earth, far yet from ruling it, barely holding his own against savage beasts and threatening hunger, and without love or faith or much hope — just the blind *instinct to live*, keeping him alive. What has love and wisdom yet to do with such a world, or such a product of the world?

I have not time, I need not go on to tell the oft-told tale of man's later progress, his defeats, his many shames; the many far ebbings in the tide of his advance, the many fair hopes of men and of nations cast down and betrayed; of civilizations at last built up with much toil and blood, only to crumble into the dust again and forever to be lost and forgotten. But in spite of all these tragic and costly changes, the most careless student can now perceive a rise in life's scale, a growing towards a fuller self-consciousness; a widening of the certainty of responsibility, a vast increase of the sense of pity, and a steady determination, even when storms are at their height, to keep life's tiller true. Night is not yet passed, nor are the storms yet over, but who could ever have dreamed, in those ages so far behind us, who could have dreamed, that out of such a chaos should have come forth the miracle, man?

Knowledge is not yet ours. Day may not yet have dawned, but we are aware of a rose of coming dawn upon the gray sea, and on our earth, once without form and void, where un-

disturbed darkness reigned, life's veil is thinning fast, and life is pervious to light as none would have dared to dream of its perviousness ages ago. Knowledge already is beginning to murmur a hesitating "amen" to the deep abiding hopes born of instinct and religion, and faith ventures to believe and declare that, as out of that swirling chaos, an order, an order inconceivable has come, so again out of what seems to us much confusion and waste and death, in the mystery of that order, is at last to emerge a state of being as much completer and fairer than the present as the present is fairer than the past.

Earth's history is the old story told over and over again, of Orpheus going even to hell to claim his bride. Why man needs chaos and hell, and why by an irresistible divine song-call he is ever lifted out of it, who can say? *But man came from chaos, and what may not yet come from man?*

Surely it is reasonable to believe that back of all veilings, penetrating at last all veils (for he has hung them), God our Father lives,

above all, through all, over all from the beginning; that all creation is but the burying-away of life, the sowing of divine seedbeds. Whether it be in the ravines of the great sea, or the gauzy veilings of the silkworm, or the mysteriously sensitive gray matter of the human brain, all creation is but a temporary veiling of life from God — *a going-forth from Him, that it may return to Him.* "For yet doth he ever devise means, whereby his banished be not expelled from him" (as the wise woman said long ago to the mourning king). His banished ones own instinctively their banishment, and strangely and variously try to come home. That is the meaning surely of life's struggle up. So the larvæ struggles for a winged life, and the monkey fought his way to a man's life, and manhood stretches out longing, empty arms of prayer and calls upon his God for a divine life.

God of the granite and the rose,
Soul of the sparrow and the bee,
The mighty tide of being rolls,
Through countless channels, Lord, from Thee.

It springs to life in grass and flowers,
Through every grade of being runs,
While from creation's utmost towers,
Its glory streams in stars and suns.

These are more than dreams. They are hopes founded by multitudes not only on growing knowledge and widening experience, but on a deeper understanding of the universal longings and purposes of mankind.

Jesus was a man supremely pervious to God. Shelley dreamed a dream long ago — one of the most beautiful dreams that ever visited a poet. He said: —

Life like a dome of many-colored glass
Stains the white radiance of Eternity.

He saw the eternal life slowly penetrating our lower life, shining through it. William James, in his luminous lecture on Immortality, amplifies that thought. The measure of the scale of living things may be the thickness or thinness of the veil they present to God's "white radiance."

Surely of this much we may be sure, that when we come to study ourselves, we cannot

but admit that life's veilings have thinned marvellously. See man preparing for his momentous career! Nine months of silence, seeing not, knowing not, yet wonderful things of feet and hands and brain, of tongue and taste, of eyes and heart, waiting for a baby's resurrection. Man's first life waiting to issue forth into the large world — and mark, not ages to wait, not years, but only nine short months before he reaches the sunlight; semi-conscious motherhood meanwhile playing its mysterious and as yet but partially understood part.

Then after birth begins the second life of man. Now the veil is thinner still. Invariable law and fixed order lay their yoke on the growing thing, yet soft hands and watchful care attend it, shielding it from danger, saving it from harm. Ah, how grudgingly love sees life fare forth! How yearningly we would save it all pain and penalty if we might; take its first woes on our parent shoulders if we but could! It may not be. So we set our children to their childish tasks. We exact obedience and effort, and insist on responsibility. For we would

make them men, to know manhood's joy and duties, and in time take up and finish manhood's tasks. They must finish what we began. They must succeed where we failed.

Sometimes we think that it is into a cold and heedless world we usher our children. We forget that our loving care, our passionate tenderness are but part and parcel of that world's order. The world forces and influences reach them, it is true, but these were meant to reach them through us. As for nine months the mother's bosom sheltered man's first life, so for an indefinitely long term parental love was ordained to shelter his second. Love, care, and wisdom tend life as it makes its fateful entrance. Childhood is pervious to parentage. What we have won, what we are, in large part we pass on to our children.

Now what I am trying to make clear to you is that as our children are pervious to all we are as their parents, so are we pervious to God. Our plan of life for our children in the small is God's plan for all of us his children in the large. Man is a demigod. He rules by divine

right this earth which is his kingdom. There is the unaccountable, there is the semi-miraculous within him. Of us poor men even it is true, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" He transforms the earth on which he lives. He yokes to his car earth's forces. More and more he compels nature to do his bidding, and profoundly he changes the face of the world. And beyond even these powers there belongs to him the power of choice; he can sink to the beast whence he came, or rise by self-mastery to the heights of genius or of sainthood. He can turn on or off the light of life, and so make his soul a holy temple or an unclean pigsty.

It seems to me, the more I think on human life, that its history has been, and yet shall be, just one long filling of the splendid promise and command made and given to Adam in the legend of Genesis, "Have thou dominion." Forth from the faultless irresponsibilities of the garden life man had to pass, that he might take up the great task of being a man. Nothing henceforth comes to him without toil. His

very daily bread shall depend on the sweat of his brow, but as he fits himself for lordship, lordship is given him. The secrets, the beauties, the powers lying unused and dormant in his kingdom, are only waiting for his compelling command. He is the child of all the long past. In him, and in him alone, can her ages of travail be rewarded. *He is both her explanation and her king.* As St. Paul magnificently put it, "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth, . . . waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God."[1]

Here at last in little Judea stands the Son of man. He is fit to be King, and King he therefore is, for he is supremely pervious to God. Such was the impression Jesus made on the ignorant but honest men who companied with him from the first, and though much that must have seemed utterly supernatural to them may to us seem natural, surely our knowledge of what man can do, and of what man did do, is so necessarily imperfect that the time for dogmatizing has not arrived.

[1] Romans VIII, 19, 22.

Furthermore, those who charge orthodox religion with alone maintaining, in the face of scientific evidence to the contrary, an impossible doctrine of the supernatural, forget or ignore the fact that there is everywhere among plain people a tacit recognition and admission of the truth of supernaturalism to-day. Such admission is implied and understood in the laws of the land. "By act of God," so old laws still read. And so not the priesthood alone, but religious and irreligious people alike, philosophers and teachers, orthodox and heretic, kings and commoners, all professedly still believe in a God who acts on human affairs, not in one way, but in two different ways — one an orderly way, acting in and by the mind and work of man and nature's processes; the other, an *outside* way, an *interfering* way. God has, of course, in the common belief, his laws; these are beneficent and work on the whole for good. But he is not confined to these, but from time to time can and does, in response to special prayer and appeal made to him, sweep down, as it were, from heavenly

calm into the troubled vortex of mundane affairs, and, by a sudden exercise of divine energy, reassert his will and indicate his authority. This was the old belief of the Jews. All early religions are full of such a faith and strong in the assurance of a divine partiality. In such a belief Moslem, Calvinist, and Catholic alike went forth to accomplish and did accomplish the greatest tasks of men. Those were days in which men heartily believed in verbal inspiration and communicating voices from heaven. We who have ceased to believe in the value of such means of divine leading *have not yet succeeded in replacing them with more reasonable opinions.*

The old is out of date, the new is not yet born.

The form of the old, mummified, dusty dead remains to trouble us.

One more important point I must raise before I leave this subject. The interfering, the partial, the supernaturally acting God is still the God usually given to childhood. And here we do our children a cruel wrong. At school, at college, our view of the world and

its mysteries is pressed on them. At home, if any religious teaching at all is given, it is too often of the archaic sort which I have been describing. *It is the impossible and unworthy religion of the interfering God.*

Is it because we have not time? Is it because we have not wit? Or is it not rather because, to part with the great patient, partial Companion of our own youth is so cruelly hard to us ourselves? I think this is often the chief cause of our faithless failure to re-state fully religious things to our children, or at least make the best attempt we can to do so. But oh, my friends, in this matter we must not weakly sentimentalize. Our children are born into an age, truth-seeking, truth-honoring. The Son of man, whose last appeal rang forth, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice," can lead and inspire, as none other has or can, such an age, and as the supreme witness to the truth and martyr for the truth, we must present him to

the young of our age. Let us do this, and they may be trusted to make their way to Jesus, and that Jesus who has led their fathers will surely lead them.

I am old enough to remember Professor W. K. Clifford's exceeding bitter cry after the lost "companion God" of his youth. "We have seen the spring sun shine out of an empty heaven, to light up a soulless earth. We have felt with utter loneliness that the great Companion is dead." Clifford had been taught to worship the partial, the outside, the interfering, the supernaturally working God. The spirit of his time seized on him. He must go forth among the searchers, the discoverers of his generation. At any cost he must seek the truth; and so bravely he went. And the spirit of new discovery seized on him, as it did on the choice youth of fifty years ago. Men called it the scientific spirit. It seized on Clifford, as in other times it had seized on John Huss, Columbus, Michael Angelo, or Sir Francis Drake, inspiring them to strange and epoch-making adventure.

Ah, we may go much farther back in our old world's story, and still we shall find men breaking away from the dream God of their youth, sometimes seemingly to lose him forever, and sometimes to find a larger, juster, lovelier God. Our dreams have beautiful things in them, and because they are dreams, there mingle with the beautiful distorted and impossible things as well. Now, two things have combined to destroy the dream God of our youth. First, the growth of our moral consciousness. Our concepts of justice between man and man have changed, have risen. Our sense of responsibility for men less fortunate than ourselves has risen. We are on the side of the weak. We would if we could apportion life's burdens to the shoulders that must bear them. The obvious inequalities of life startle us. The unfairness of its divisions fills us with reforming, interfering zeal. *Nature is abominably partial.* She pets and spoils some of her children, while she starves and stunts others. We see these things clearly, and more than that, we feel them keenly. In-

stinctively we recognize in these cruelly unequal conditions a state of things we are impelled by all that is highest and worthiest within us to change, or, so far as we can, remove altogether.

To the man who tries to find and follow the truth to-day, this is the task confronting him. A great task! A long task! But he believes not an impossible one. It is all that and more. It is a new task. It is the task of the new creature — *the Christian democrat.*

It is not so long since good men, who bravely and successfully faced their own tasks, set for themselves a very different aim. They recognized that they were God's chosen —nature's (but they would not use that word) fortunate ones; *the Elect*, in short. They were anxious to maintain their superior position before all other things. They were what they were by the choice and blessing of a favoring God. Their prosperity on earth was a sign of divine approval. Their own future happiness in heaven was the one first and

chief object of their search and prayer. So far are we removed from them, so greatly does our moral consciousness revolt from their standards of duty, that we find it hard at times to believe that they tried, as we are trying, to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and be made like unto him. Our moral consciousness forbids us to entertain their idea of God.

Secondly, the partial, the outside, the interfering God must go before man's widening, deepening understanding of the universe in which he finds himself; of which he is a part, a product; not something planted in it, but something springing out of it, justifying and explaining it all. In great and small, in high and low, in far past as well as in vital present, in all the universe, everywhere and always, is seen the unfailing working of law and order. Chance and caprice are shut out. An interfering and partial God is unknown. I have searched many books to find a definition of our order of law that is at the same time succinct and understandable by ordinary men.

The best I can find is in the writings of a great Jewish philosopher, Spinoza :—

> The providence of God is just the stable order of the universe, in which reason can find itself more and more at home, and fashion out of its materials new instruments for progress and happiness. All God's laws are inviolably observed. They partake of the nature of God himself. Being in fact his nature revealed, they are therefore characterized by eternal necessity and truth.[1]

Now I think all can understand this great man's statement of the inviolability of law, and I think most will admit its truth, and if it is true, then you can readily understand what the supernatural cannot be. The supernatural cannot be a breaking of those very laws by which Wisdom, Power, Love Eternal expresses itself. I may not understand those laws. I may misread them. I may not discover them, and so may make many and sad mistakes; men have done so and will yet do so in days to come. But if there is a God, as St. Paul believed, "above all and in all," so

[1] Professor Robert A. Duff, *Political and Ethical Philosophy of Spinoza*, p. 167.

surely then are his laws the expression of a divine wisdom, power, and love, and so surely must they be *inviolable.* To doubt that is to court madness.

In the full meaning, therefore, of the term "supernatural," using it as it should and must be used, *neither Jesus nor his works can be supernatural.* We may not be able to explain him — we are not able. I do not believe that any knowledge we have, or for a long time hence may have, of men or of matter, will explain Jesus. But this is not to proclaim him a supernatural, as one outside our universe of law. Nay, he was part of God's "eternal order of necessity and truth."

Bearing in mind what I have said about the supernatural, let us turn to the person of the Master. The old way of accounting for his person and birth, the way by which we have, most of us, been brought up to account for them, the way commonly called "orthodox," is no real way at all. Yet it is the way at least professed to be believed in by most Christians. *It is not the oldest way.* It is the way of

the ages after Jesus, not of the times of Jesus. That he was virgin born, without earthly father, and not as are other men, is stated in two of the gospels; and these are not the earliest compilations. The oldest gospel, Mark, makes no reference to his birth at all. Luke traces his genealogy to Joseph. Jesus himself never refers to his birth. The apostles never mention it. It is referred to in no apostolic epistle. As a dogma it was formally grafted on Christian belief at the Council of Nice, 325 A.D.

By the fourth century the idea of the virgin birth had become the custom of the time. The Christian religion had made great progress in the East. Egypt was the ancient home of such beliefs. The East accepted such a birth as an almost usual thing. The great, the divine, were so born. Thus it was natural to think of Jesus as born of a virgin. If the divine man, the supreme saviour was to outshine, out-rank all other men, he too must be virgin born. So in quite early days, myth gathered round the Master, good men again brought to

the best they knew, the best they had, and in time the anathema of the Church was stamped on all who denied what neither Jesus nor his apostles knew anything about.

To us, who are not quite so densely ignorant of biological matters as were the men of those times, it is of course evident that the theory they held to could not yield them what they sought. By eliminating an earthly father, those good men would fain free their Lord's nature from all mundane stain, from all taint of human sin and error. After the ignorance of the time, they believed that the positive quality, the determining factor, in human generation was the male; the mother was merely a passive agent. This belief was natural in an age that gave to women so lowly a place, but it was inaccurate. They were seeking to do him honor for whose sake they were prepared to die, and they did it in the only way they knew. It was all most natural, but we can honor Jesus without copying their error or accepting their impossible theories of biology.

The pot-makers are at work again. Beauti-

ful garments to adorn the son of Mary must be woven, another treasury built to retain and protect the living seed of his body. Let us thankfully accept the precious heritage they pass down to us. Let us claim the Saviour, while reverently we lay aside as outworn and no longer necessary the very old and beautiful myth that shadows his cradle. It is undeniably beautiful, but even so it would rob us of what is most precious in our Lord. There is another picture of that cradle. An older picture and one at least as beautiful. The inspired unknown who wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews gives it to us, and it runs: "Wherefore *in all things* it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren."[1] One like us in all things, one of us he declared himself to be, and no mistaken adulation of his person must rob us of his human reality. *Unless Jesus was a man with limited knowledge, with human attributes and temptations, his life can be for me no true model, his death no comforting example to men.* If he came into our world

[1] Heb. II, 17.

as no other man came, if his course in that world was marked by superhuman power over the forces of nature that confront and oppress us, then the text I have placed at the head of this lecture is a misleading delusion: "*He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.*"

To multitudes of faithful people still these old theories that we were brought up on present no insurmountable difficulties. Let such hold to them; only, as they do so, let them recognize that these ancient dogmas as to the method of Jesus' incarnation *are not of the original deposit*, but are the growth (the natural and necessary growth, I admit) of a later time.

Let those, on the other hand, who reject time-worn tradition remember that no theory of Jesus' person, because it is more reasonable than those we reject, can avail to make any of us like him. *To be like him, we must follow and obey him*, for only in obeying shall

we learn to know his truth or share his power.

In conclusion, I hear some say, "If the old theories, old beliefs have worked so well, if you can still say as you do, 'Let those who believe them retain them,' why do you then come here disturbing our faith, denying and destroying our old precious beliefs?"

Let me try and tell you why. There are multitudes to-day of honest men and women who have been uplifted and inspired by what is best in the truth-seeking, truth-loving spirit of our time. Amid the immense activities of the age, the bewildering increase of knowledge, they stand confused. New duties appeal to them in throngs; ancient wrongs, seeming to them dreadful, call for reform and removal. Between their intensified sense of truth, their deepened consciousness of duty, they are overwhelmed. Such people need a strong, sane, hopeful, and inspiring leader, *and such is Jesus*. Never did any age need his leadership as our age needs it. And not as guide only, but as old-fashioned Saviour we need him, for

sin, in new and beautifully compelling guise, waylays us still, as it ever has the sons and daughters of men. No merely scientific spirit can save us, or can take with us the place of him who is called Jesus, "for he shall save his people from their sins."

Now orthodoxy agrees to all this, and approves such statements, and then quickly forgets that if it insist on making the guide and Saviour a supernatural and half-human being, then he can no longer be a real guide or a real Saviour. He fades away from us into the region of mirage and myth. Orthodox Christianity does actually say, "I am Christianity. I have built and supported these churches. I welcome you to them. I offer you this spiritual treasure of which I have been appointed the guardian. I would lead you to the Lord I love and revere, that you may know the comfort of his Spirit, the power and peace of his salvation. The church doors are open to you. My hand is stretched in welcome. In the name of my Lord, I invite you, but — unless you agree with me about the mystery

of his nature, before birth, at birth, and after birth, you cannot have my Lord at all." Alas, I am not exaggerating. So far as orthodoxy is concerned, the echo of an age-old anathema is in the air, and they who cannot accept the Son of the virgin, the impossible mythic man; they to whom the supernatural is impossible and repellent, may not have Jesus at all.

Jesus said, and died saying that every one that was of the Truth heard his voice; that every one that sought to do his will, had a place by right in his company. Orthodoxy knows better than the Master himself what he wanted, and so imposes on his would-be disciples conditions and beliefs he not only did not formulate, but knew nothing about. Human nature repeats itself. The very disciples, when the Master was not by, did not hesitate to bar good men from him because they could not agree with those men. The disciples, in their own small, prejudiced, and narrow way, were quite ready to do precisely what the Pharisees had done in the large, more authoritative and national way, namely,

bind burdens on men's shoulders — burdens of custom, tradition, and agreement — till the very state of affairs Jesus protested against had again obtained, and good men had made "the word of God of none effect through their tradition."

I have been out in the world of to-day, and I know whereof I speak. I have looked at men outside our closely drawn sheepfold lines, and outside those lines I see thousands who should be inside. *These outsiders need, and feel they need, the efficiency of organized religious life.* They, or the most of them, recognize the need of organization. Without it nothing can be stable in our human affairs; because of it, we have Christianity. Had not Christianity been strongly organized in the form of a Church, during long, ignorant, and doubtful times, we should not be where we are, or know or prize what we have, what has been handed down to us.

The *mode of the Church's government may be a matter of expediency, but the need of the Church's firm organization is a matter*

of prime necessity. If any Church would stand, it must effectively organize the spiritual life of its membership, or all that has been gained by it for mankind may be scattered and lost by the vagaries and eccentricities of individual feeling and action. Multitudes of good men outside our churches realize all this, yet they are still outside. If they need the Church, surely the Church needs them. If they need shepherding, she needs sheep. They alone can save her from dry rot. They alone can fill her depleted and undersized ranks, and make her efficient in her holy war. They are not inside because they cannot, they believe, honestly profess what the Church calls on them to profess. They profoundly believe they can, for the present, better serve the truth-loving Son of man by refusing to say about him and about his Church what they cannot believe to be true. Mistake it not, forget it not, the crusading ages are not past and dead. The greatest crusade that faith, hope, and charity have ever ventured forth on is but beginning, and only one man can lead it to a glorious end.

The mass of men are slaves still — slaves to their passions, to their condition, to their prejudices, to their poverty, to their lot. Morally, socially, economically, mentally, the multitudes are still in bondage, but a brighter day is dawning, and a spirit of larger charity and higher resolve is moving the hearts of men. Oh, that the old Church would but recognize the fatefulness of the hour and place herself at its head. The crusade is her crusade, the old, old cause of mankind, and its aim is not the winning of Christ's birthplace, but the freeing of his sons.

V

JESUS' DOCTRINE

Never man spake like this man. — John VII, 46.

A FURTHER question remains to be answered. Where did Jesus get his doctrine? Have the truths he gave to men their sole origin in him? Was he the first to see and reveal them? Is he a teacher, — as the early mystics saw him, — "without spiritual father or mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life," or did he not rather find the basis of what he gave to men, and often more than the mere basis, in the continuous revelation that had providentially been given to the Jew from the very beginning of his national life? Thus to put the question is to answer it. Jesus' teachings, as they are recorded for us, are on this point explicit. He built his doctrine on the past, and he quoted the sacred writings to prove the righteousness of his ap-

peal. He claimed ever to fulfil, not to destroy, the best beliefs and hopes that his people inherited from their lawgivers and their prophets. He denounced those inevitable processes by which the truth given to one age had been muffled up and distorted by the next, but ever as he did this, he appealed to the example of the greatest of those before him — who had been obliged to make the very same protest. When he chooses his text, — challenged to declare himself in the little society where he had been brought up, — it is taken from that great teacher who long before had cried,—

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." [1]

This same mighty voice it was that had hurled against Jewish formalism the tremendous accusation: —

"To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the

[1] Is. LXI, 1, 2.

burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. . . . Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with. . . . Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: . . . I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean." [1]

No one can read such passages as these and not recognize in them the very spirit of the appeal of Jesus. In claiming too, as he did, the right to push aside some of the legislation which the nation believed had Mosaic sanction, he only stood where the great prophets stood before him.

In his teaching, then, so far as he can, Jesus takes his texts from the past. He finds the living seeds still growing in old and weed-choked fields. He gathers the grain of God and of truth, and re-sows it. Let me particularize: His doctrine of life for man beyond

[1] Is. 1, 11–16.

the grave was no new doctrine to the later Jews. Most of them held to it stoutly, though by legal subtleties they might obscure it. From these, then, he would rescue it, retaining its essential part. Jesus had a new and confident hold on immortality himself. It meant all in all to him, and then as he sowed it, it became a new and beautiful thing, a living seed, an inextinguishable hope. In the dark ages that were soon to fall upon the world, men would have despaired without it. In those times it was inevitable that the doctrine of immortality should assume the crudities that belonged to the times, but its life-giving power was never lost.

So in his doctrine of Fatherhood: the God Jesus worshipped was the Father of his children. In emphasizing this again the Master was but fulfilling what was best in the ancient belief. Whether he believed that all men are the children of God does not seem quite clear. Certainly St. Paul thought that he was justified in drawing such a conclusion from his teaching, for he based his appeal to the cul-

ture of Greece on a fatherhood that is universal.

What is of immediate importance to my argument, however, is that the doctrine of a divine and universal fatherhood had long before been proclaimed. In Isaiah LXIII, the prophet who has been retelling the story of God's patience with his people, claims his fatherhood for others who were not Jews. "Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer; thy name is from everlasting" (v. 16). That is to say, thy very everlasting nature is fatherly.

Finally, to take but one more instance of many in which Jesus took from the past the germ of his gospel doctrine, see his teaching of a coming kingdom of heaven. The doctrine of immortal hope developed in later Judaism meant more than a personal hope. It had come to mean the promise of a higher, holier order of living, a kingdom of heaven on earth.

In our gospels, Jesus' teaching of the king-

dom is somewhat confusedly set forth. Doubtless much that he said in regard to it has been lost, and much more retained that reflects in its final expression the wishes and standards of a succeeding age. The Apocalypse furnishes a striking instance of how soon even the best men's predictions began to mould and change the truths Jesus saw. The writer, you remember, in a series of pictures that still grip our souls, dwells with a fierce delight on the overwhelming ruin — that the "Lamb" metes out to those who deny him — when "the great day of his wrath is come." [1] "And I saw heaven opened," he says, "and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns. . . . He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a

[1] Rev. vi, 17.

sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." [1]

Literature knows nothing more sublime. The inspired writer's passion grips our souls, and may for a time carry us away. But somehow we feel we have left the Jesus we knew far behind — the Jesus of Nazareth who was meek and lowly in heart, who went about doing good and healing those that were oppressed of the devil. This view of the Kingdom of Heaven is surely very hard to reconcile with much he taught. A kingdom that "cometh not with observation," a kingdom that was "*within* men," even within his persecutors. (It was to the Pharisees he said: "The kingdom of God is within you."[2]) The Patmos doctrine is surely a glorious harking back to the older Jewish idea of the reign of God. Still, to believe, as the great Jewish teachers had ever done, in a final victory of God and

[1] Rev. xix, 11–15. [2] Luke xvii, 20, 21.

good at all was most certainly a triumph of faith. And it was from their ancient idea of that divine kingdom that the Master evolved his own gentler and more universal doctrine. He knew what was in man. Had not the best of men ever and always craved a divine King? What were all earthly kings and kingdoms, all efforts made for them, all sacrifices endured for them, but poor transient attempts to express what some day men hoped to see? And the poor sovereignty of the merely human king remained sacred because it dimly hinted at a sovereignty far transcending itself. The deep want of the human heart cries out for a king. It is the Kingdom of Heaven that I crave. The broken lights of truth; the mockeries of half knowledge; the spotted and stained goodness of the best of men, — these cannot satisfy me: I want God!

Humanity in the mass, the positivist's God, is but a poor divinity. It is abhorrent to me to think of man or any multiple of man as the highest thing in all the universe. The centre of it all must be something far holier, stronger,

less mutable than myself. In the physical order I stand alone in my greatness; yet am I a thing of but few days, holding life by a frail thread. I can mould the plastic masses to my will, I am conscious of dominion; yet in my greatness I am most conscious of my weakness and my loneliness. I want a lord and king. I cannot worship myself, or any multiple of myself. The longer I live, the surer I am that all men are alike in their good qualities and their bad. The great mass of us average about the same. Some rise here and there with about their heads a halo of some great goodness, some great virtue, some great deed done. But if you watch and observe, in spite of all the pitiful untruth and subterfuge of human biography, you will see that though acclaims mount to dizziest height, and humanity cheers its idol to the point of self-induced hysteria, though the halo-bound head be of gold, the feet that support it are of clay. The inspired visionary lacks poise, steadfast purpose, or some other necessary quality of greatness. The practical man who accomplishes great

tasks has no head of gold, nor are his feet clay. He marches to his goal with an unfaltering stride; but then those purposeful, practical feet sometimes crush the weaker folk that come in their way. We need the marching great men as much as the men of sublime vision; the puller-down of strongholds, as much as the dreamer of fair dreams. The moral qualities one lacks, the other possesses. But none possess both or all.

My soul craves something higher, completer than these — for it is athirst for God; for God to forgive me, to cleanse me, to decide for me, to judge me: ah, to do more! — to love me, to love the things in me that were almost ready to be born, but never saw the light; songs fit to be sung, but never put to earthly music; to love the innate good in me that was dwarfed and stunted. My soul is athirst for God, at the long last to care for me, to take me at my true value, and to take me home. Who can tell them? Who describe them? But such are the unquenchable longings of the human soul, and it was to them

Jesus brought his gospel of salvation, his message of hope.

God's fatherhood, — that is, a God who *cares*, — man's hope beyond death, and the ultimate victory of goodness and light over sin: this was the threefold gospel of Jesus. It was his reply to what men craved in his time, to what men have craved in all times, to what we hunger for to-day. There is no substitute for that gospel, for no other solace has been found for that craving.

I have tried, very briefly and imperfectly, then, to show you Jesus as a teacher, coming after other Jewish teachers, choosing from their store the best, the most vital messages; gathering up their clearest and holiest visions and repeating them; filling them with his own wonderful spiritual power, offering them as new, and yet as old gifts to men.

But Jesus was more than a teacher. He claimed to be an example (and that is a claim none ever made before), an example and an illustration of how a man should take his true

and divinely appointed place in the order of this world, a world wherein was much sin and suffering, much that was mysterious and baffling to faith — if men were to believe that it was created and maintained by a God who *cared*. Jesus' final claim on man's confidence and belief was this, *that he offered himself as an explanation of the order of the world.* Living, serving, dying, rising, he revealed God's will and law concerning it.

Such was the unique claim of the unique man.

Now, as was altogether natural, this claim must first be so presented as to win the confidence of his own people, the Jews. "I am not come," says he, "but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel"; and it was by his example and in obedience to his command that the first activities of the early Church were confined to missionizing in Judea.

As I have pointed out, while he lived, Jesus based his appeals to his countrymen on the ancient writings both he and they venerated.

And after he died, in claiming messiahship for him, his followers of necessity continued to base their claim on the same sources of authority. Could it be proved to them from holy writ that Jesus was the Messiah they expected, then their acceptance of him was sure. Failing the establishment of such a claim, his rejection by them was certain.

If it must be admitted, and I think it must be admitted, that often the passages quoted by the apostles and teachers, a report of whose arguments have been preserved for us in the New Testament, will not bear the heavy load of proof that they sought to impose on them, the custom of the time must be remembered in their excuse. They but handled the sacred writings as the best and wisest men of their day handled them. Gloss and paraphrase were then the rule. They could only do as they had been taught. They had seen a great light, a light falling from inmost heaven on a living man and on an ancient law. They had companied with Jesus, and had not their "hearts burned within them," as he who spake as never

man spake, "talked with them by the way and opened to them the scriptures"?

As time went on, and a larger missionary field opened before the Church, her vision widened, as Jesus had promised it should. Impelled by the spirit, Jewish Christianity became too great, too universal a thing to remain the possession of a tribe. Peter's momentous decision in the matter of the proselyte Cornelius first led to the change. The Temple's door had ever been shut to the outside world, but now a few men began to dream of a temple not "made with hands," of worshippers who bowed in spirit and in truth before, not a golden, but an invisible altar.

Then rose great Paul, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, yet deeply touched with the vision of the wider world; more fully convinced of the universal mission of Jesus than were any of that early band; and with Paul — as I have already said — there came a momentous enlargement of Christian doctrine. Paul spoke and wrote for a wider than a Jewish audience. It was necessary for him, therefore, to make

an appeal to authorities other than those the Jews revered. His manner of quotation from the sacred Scriptures is the manner of his time. His proof texts do not always prove; but apart from the method of the rabbinical school in which he was trained, and which left its permanent mark on him, Paul has the grip of a master on the sacred literature of his people, and a profoundly sympathetic understander of the wider world he set himself to win.

Just now I spoke of three great doctrines drawn by Jesus from the past — restated and enlarged by him, and given forth as living seed to men! God's fatherhood — that is, a God who cares; man's hope beyond death, Christian immortality; and the ultimate victory of goodness and light over sin — that is, the certainty of the Kingdom of Heaven. To these Paul added his philosophy of the Master's person and sacrifice. By its means he would explain them all.

To attempt even an outline of Paul's philosophy would be out of place here. Yet on one aspect of it I must dwell for a little, for

it has become part of our belief. I refer to his theory of the sacrificial value of the life and death of Jesus. This is really of first importance, because it was the earliest effort made by the Christian mind to bind together the sacrificial ideas of the Jewish past and the Christian present. Such an effort was inevitable, for Jesus himself had rendered it inevitable when he declared that his life was the fulfilling of the divine law, and that law from beginning to end was sacrificial.

Let it be at once admitted that Paul's theory of the sacrificial value of the life and death of Jesus in many ways satisfies us no longer. The ancient illustrations of the law of sacrifice, the steaming altar, the transferred guilt, the atoning blood, the mediating priest are figures of a remote and barbaric time. They served well the purpose of the time that produced and ennobled them. They helped men then to pray and to believe. They represented as high an ideal of God as men could accept, but to insist on them now would but push men towards prayerlessness and despair.

Apart from these temporal and local limitations of the mind, Paul had a vision of the meaning of the life and death of Jesus which had and has a vital relation to all life and to every age, which must survive all the temporary forms in which reverence clothes it, must outlast all sacred repositories provided for its safe-keeping. He believed that the sacrifice of Jesus is the illustration of the one finally true law of human life in this our world; that in Jesus the beauty and the reasonableness of the sacrificial life are revealed; that in this sense — and it is the highest and final sense — all priests and temples and altars are but shadows and pictures of that real sacrifice which is the sacrifice of the life of man. I will quote a passage written towards the close of his life which embodies the Pauline philosophy — and is indeed a comprehensive statement of what the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus came to mean to him: —

"Not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others. Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who,

being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."[1]

In these verses St. Paul's meaning at least is unmistakable. They sum up, too, much of his maturer teaching. The question which some of us are in doubt about to-day is, Is it possible to accept a rule of life so difficult, so simple? Surrounded as we are by temptations, conscious as we are of a pitiful mixture of motive, is it possible for us in any real sense to yield practical obedience to these most searching and comprehensive commands? Look steadily, says the apostle, with purposefulness, with honest intention, not on your own affairs

[1] Phil. II, 4–11, R. V.

only, but on the things of others. Look as you would look when pursuing your own interests, wisely, bravely; not merely as you study a problem, but as you plan an enterprise. Look on the things of others, and, as you look, let Christ's very mind be yours; look as he looked. The prize of life he could have grasped; he sought it not for himself. All the powers of an extraordinary manhood were his; he stripped himself of them and voluntarily forewent his own legitimate advantage. He stooped to weakness when he need not have stooped. He was willing to die, and met death in its most awful shape; turning to death, agony, and defeat; choosing these deliberately as his portion sooner than give up his high purpose of saving his fellow men. His deliberate mode of action, ruling all his life and finally consummated by his death, Paul declares God accepts and crowns, and, so accepting and crowning it, declares it to be the *one supreme, final, permanent, and victorious form of life forever*. This indisputably is St. Paul's meaning. This is Christianity, and the mind of Christ

as he understood it, preached it, and died for it.

Is this mind of Christ possible to us to-day? There is very much in the everyday life of us all which seems, at a superficial glance, to deny the practicability of living after this high standard. We need the stimulus of competition. This is not lacking even in our college days. You are feeling what you believe to be its legitimate influence now. You are gathering the results, in these last few crowded, exciting weeks of your university life, of a series of competitions, in which you have engaged during all the course of it; and you feel that in the stimulus of reasonable competition there is real good. Yet if you look at this college life of yours at all searchingly, you are soon aware that competition forms a very small part of its life. Its main value lies far away from mere advantages of competition. Its chief gains are not to be won in any game of grab. Rather it is in coming to understand your own life, winning invaluable opportunities to study men of like purposes and yet different capaci-

ties from your own, and in the leisurely associating with so much that is best and stimulating in American life and scholarship, that the main good of it all lies. And as from over the college walls, in an occasional thoughtful hour, you look towards the future, you have felt again that competition as a rule of life with one's fellow is, after all, a semi-barbarous law, and that it bears to the generous spirit pretty much the same relation that the stinging spur does to the thoroughbred's flank. By itself, it never won a great race yet. The best blood scarcely acknowledges it.

Thus, as we look within and then without, we are gradually aware that in a strange and wonderful way the ideal of self-sacrificing service is growing on men. When sometimes, disheartened and downcast, we seem to see in life just the same sordidness and cruelty that used to rule it long ago, we are aware that such a state of mind is more or less colored by passing mood or feeling, and is not borne out by fact. The studies of these past years ought to have done something to convince you that

there is a tide in the affairs of men, a tide of pity, an earnest, self-sacrificing interest, that flows and ebbs not. More thoughtfully, more considerately, man looks on the life of his fellow. Our forefathers played the game of grab so remorselessly, we ourselves are so often keenly set at it, that a life without strife, an existence in which competition in a thousand forms and shapes does not play a prominent part, is hard, nay, almost impossible for us to conceive. We are so wedded to ideas of contention and competition that any other conditions than those springing from these are well-nigh inconceivable to us.

And yet his life is poor and narrow, indeed, who has not been blest by some vision of an existence in which love casts out strife; some limited sphere of life, at least, in which competition and strife are not. It is possible for even a very imperfect character to love some one with such a love that into his relations with that person competition and strife cannot enter. For this loved one we forego our own advantage with delight. For the sake of such, to suffer is

as natural a thing as to breathe. Further than this, if we look around us thoughtfully, we must be aware that man's sphere of love is ever widening; that widening interests bring men more and more together. Warmer ties are gaining strength surely, if slowly. Man is no longer cut off from man as he used to be. Life overlaps life. The hard, high walls of prejudice and caste, of difference in fortune, and even in nationhood, no longer serve to separate men altogether from each other, as they used to do.

Look backward for the space of a few generations only, and you see the best men, the wisest, the most cultivated, incomprehensibly callous to the wants and woes of those near them, untouched by the feeling of their infirmity, unmoved by their bitterest cry. Some two years ago, I happened to spend two weeks of spring weather in the ancient city of Nuremberg. There, little changed by our modern life, stands that wonderful city. In its courts and palaces, in its narrow streets and splendid churches, the very spirit of mediævalism seems

to have found its last retreat. There is scarcely a finer hall in Europe than that splendid council chamber in which Nuremberg's great citizens, successful merchants, and valiant captains took counsel for peace and for war. Around that banqueting-hall, blazoned on its walls, is the tale of Nuremberg's greatness. There the great fresco speaks of her past life and glory, her wealth, her power, her independence, her artistic genius. And in the most natural way, mingled with this record, is the story of her unconscious cruelty, too. The tale of tortured criminal stands written on the wall as plainly as the glory of the lordly merchant. With equal truth they are drawn side by side. As you stand in the hall, the golden light falling through wide windows, rich in glass, it is easy to think yourself back in the time when what was richest, wisest, fairest, bravest, and best in that central city of Europe met and feasted where now you stand. But what another story is hidden beneath the great stone floor! Go down a few feet, and there, for your inspection, open up whole rows of cells. Oh,

such cells! Noisome, dank, unpenetrated by a single sun-ray. There in darkness, utter and profound, men, and women, too, were imprisoned, tortured, put to death; while a foot above their heads, the solid stone shutting out all sound of revelry from above or of wail from below, the great citizens feasted and drank, planned wars and discussed commerce.

Could such things be to-day? We smile at the idea; it is an insult to imagine it possible. And yet those men and women that feasted were not specially bad men and women; nor did those poor wretches who suffered beneath own often to any worse sin than misfortune. Why has the former state of things passed away? I tell you, brothers, there is but one reason — it is the advance of the tide of "the mind of Christ." Year by year, it seemed, to those who watched it, to ebb as often as to flow. Slowly, very slowly, it rose on the sands, and as each watcher failed at his post, his testimony as to its rising was all too uncertain to assure him who took his place. But there was no ebb for all that.

For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,
Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
Comes silent, flooding in, the main.

And not by eastern windows only,
When daylight comes, comes in the light;
In front, the sun climbs slow — how slowly!
But westward, look, the land is bright.

It is rising still. I tell you the time will come —I believe it is near at hand — when it will be impossible for men and women to live, as even now they are living, in the broad and beautiful houses of our great cities, surrounding themselves there with all the rich gifts and bounty of life, while close to them hundreds of thousands of their fellow citizens are shut down within the pestiferous narrowness of the tenement-house or the sweat-shop. It will be as impossible for things which exist to-day to continue to exist side by side in our cities and land as it would be to fill Nuremberg's broad hall in this twentieth century with feasting citizens, while her dungeons beneath were choked with the victims of her torture. Yes, love is casting out strife, is taking the bitterness out

of competition. Love recognizes to-day, as she never did before, misfortune as establishing a claim on fortune, and sorrow and suffering as pleas from which an honorable man must never turn away, if he would hope for the favor, not only of a merciful God, but of his own justifying conscience.

Again I ask, Why is this? It is because the mind of Christ is increasingly becoming a power among men. But as I seek to set before you the reasonableness and certainty and coming prevalence of this mind of Christ, I shall perhaps be accused of sentimentalism. The plea I make, you say, is sentimental. Is it so? I would have you remember that it is not the voice of religion alone that calls you to-day to make the mind of Christ a power in your own lives and in the world. What science to-day, in the interest she excites, and in the splendid triumphs she has won, takes more prominent place than does physiology in all her branches? We might call her the regnant science to-day. It requires little more than a knowledge of first principles of physiology to assure our-

selves that this youngest of all the sciences calls on those who follow her deliberately to accept self-sacrifice as their law. Somewhat heady with her own intoxicating success, she stands before the world to-day. "Listen to me," she seems to say; "let me speak. I may be the youngest in the class, but I have something important to say." And when she does tell of her own things, with a captivating vigor of youth and enthusiasm cast around her, what is the burden of her testimony? *Involuntary sacrifice in the lowest orders of life — voluntary sacrifice in the highest forms of life.* This is her testimony, her message, her gospel. In these highest she calls it altruism. It is really "the mind of Christ." "You," she cries to those who listen to her — "you are the result of age-long processes of sacrifice; fall in with the law that made you what you are. Let this mind be in you: forego your own advantage, and, doing so, win your highest life."

Or listen with me for a moment to another voice of weight, that in no special sense claims

to be religious. Listen to the voice of history. This teacher, too, has the confidence of youth, of youth renewed at least. She tells us that we are only beginning to understand how to place together in their proper order and sequence the lessons of the past. "In physics," she cries, "you have fixed laws, laws by which you can judge certainly of nature's sequences. By these the tides rise and fall, the winds come and go, light follows darkness, and the glory of the spring the rigor of the winter. To the aid of these and the conduct of them the will of man is not necessary. Seed-time and harvest, day and night, snow and heat, summer and winter, shall not fail." But in the conduct of his own affairs, it is vitally necessary that man take into his consideration *the property and responsibility of his own will.* Nature mates herself to that will. She aids man so long as he struggles. She is to him a sturdy helpmeet. She will not live with him, however, as a sloven. She will marry him, but not slave for him. If he neglect her, she withdraws her forces, her vital warmth from him. Whether

it is an individual or a generation of individuals, this is true of man's relations to her. She will give man no assurance of faithfulness on her part, and permanent support springing from that faithfulness, if he continue faithless to her. She will help her mate, man, to prepare for each generation a more favorable environment in some respects than the previous generation had. Intellectually, morally, the atmosphere, the environment may be more favorable. But let that generation, thus kindly greeted and provided for by nature, fail of its duty, cease to do its part, be lacking in some essential requirement, and the higher platform to which it has been lifted serves but to prepare the way for a more disastrous and irremediable fall. The comparative study of history makes it abundantly evident to the student of to-day that each generation can do no more for its successor than provide it with a stout platform on which to battle out its own destiny, wrestle for its life, prove its own worthiness to exist, save its own soul from the death.

At first sight, there seems little that favors

the Christ mind in the conclusions of historic science. Look a little closer and you will see that this is not so. The very essence of that mind is willingness, for the good of others, to forego its own legitimate advantage. When first a few ignorant and weak men dared to proclaim such mind as the final type of human mind, what state of things were they confronted by? There was spread all over the known world a civilization marvellous in its success. Seemingly it was established forever. It had founded itself on the ruin of all previous civilizations. It had borrowed from their experiences; it had been warned by their failures. Its rule seemed as eternal as the hills of its own capital city. And why? Men great and small, old men and children, had lived, planned toiled, fought, and been willing to die for Rome; and rich in the self-sacrifice of her children, Rome stood forth steady and strong beyond compare. She rose, flourished, and blessed mankind. But Rome grew rich and wanton; both rich and poor alike sunk into selfishness. The poor cried only for bread and

pleasure, and the rich for pleasure and power; and so the crash of it all soon came. For Rome was but the husk of herself. She had turned to her muck-heap, and forgotten the glory of her early crown. The fair became foul, the wife a wanton, justice was sold, honor fled, the mind of Christ was openly scoffed at. She fell and her fall was great. Innocent and guilty fell together, for the hope of mankind had been betrayed by Rome. On her wreck and ruin, after a time of doubt and dismay, larger foundations of liberty and hope for mankind arose. For in Frank, Goth, and Visigoth, and in all the so-called wave of barbarism which had swept over her, possibilities of higher life were existent which were no longer possible to her. On these Christianity took hold. Their young lives were her new seed-bed.

It is not doubtful that real advance has been made towards the realization by man of "the mind of Christ." In regard to its law, we no longer stand where our forefathers stood. We may fail sadly still, but we aim at higher things than they, we judge ourselves by a

higher standard. Our ideals, at least, are less self-seeking. To prove this would not be difficult, but as time fails me, I must content myself by merely stating it.

The law of sacrifice explained and illustrated in his matchless life — sealed by his lonely dying — is the gift Jesus gave to men. Jesus of course used the language and similes he best knew when he taught it. Paul had other learning than that of Jesus, and looked forth on an enlarged world. Consequently the Pauline method and similes are not those Jesus himself employed. The Christian churches — as I have repeatedly said to you — still too often feel themselves obliged to use only those methods, similes, forms of expression, that Jesus knew and used, — or Paul or the early Fathers knew and used, — and have thus failed to make reasonable and cogent their appeal to modern times. For instance, science really is doing far more to commend the law of sacrifice, the law of the "mind of Christ" to men to-day, than all its professed followers and nominal advocates; not always because

these last are not sincere and intelligent, but because the terms they use sound uncouth and unreal to educated men.

We have not ceased to believe in the necessity of sacrifice. Good men in all religions, wise men in all nations, know well that the law of sacrifice is a vital and changeless law, but clinging to the nomenclature of the long past, seeking to explain the sacrificial life in terms out of date, the so-called Christian system of sacrifice, appears unreal and absurd, and often unmoral as well. Orthodox terminology to-day still is the same as that employed by good men whose conceptions of sacrifice found their most natural illustrations in the shambles, in lowing herds and blood-sprinkled altars. These to them seemed the natural way of approach to God.

Such terms as justification, expiation, atonement, imputed righteousness, transferred sin had once for sacrificing men a tremendous meaning. To use them to-day is but to bewilder and estrange those who are honestly seeking to conform their faulty and selfish

lives to self-sacrifice's changeless and universal law. Of that law Jesus' life and dying are still the supreme illustration, but orthodoxy now veils from the minds of multitudes the real significance of both.

As St. Paul handles the law of sacrifice in the passage I have read to you, it is as fresh and full of meaning for us to-day as it ever was. The Saviour, whom St. Paul speaks of as crowned with everlasting glory, and before whose august feet all things in heaven and earth do bow and obey, sits on the throne of his universe, not by favor, but by right. He is exalted because he alone has explained and vindicated its *universal* law. The whole universe, animate and inanimate, bends in homage to him because he has made glorious its own supreme law — the law of sacrifice and of service. Through all the dark and vaporous gray ages of the past, that law has slowly worked out its painful processes. It had been sobbed in the universe, ages before it was revealed on the cross of Christ. This is the force of St. Paul's "Wherefore." Who shall

justify to the universe her sorrow, toil, pain, dying? Who shall stand and explain her long, long travail pang? *Man, and only man.* Only a Man-Child glorious can pay the poor earth back for her long-drawn-out travail pang. *Without man nature is inexplicable.* And man stands confused before himself, uncertain of whence he came and whither he goes, incapable of explaining and justifying what he is, and what he wants to be, till the highest Man stands before him and says: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father but by me. See in me the explanation of all that you see, and feel, and hope for in yourself."

"*Therefore* God hath highly exalted him." The life of Christ is the final type, and therefore no other life can be finally successful. There can be no two victorious types. The final life must be the fitted life. The unfitted must cease to be. The life that lives in its true relations, — to permit any other life than this to survive would be to undo what the ages have been doing; would be to reverse the law

by which the lower die, that the higher may flourish. God himself cannot make a world in which the saurian exists side by side with man. Saurians are the best possible forms of life at one stage, yet impossible at the next. The conditions of the saurian are the conditions of the Carboniferous age; these would but choke and strangle the man. *To persist in conditions is the meaning of sin.* A universe favorable to the highest must of necessity be less favorable to that which is not so high. The mind of Christ and the selfish spirit of self-seeking cannot finally co-exist. Which is to be in us, brothers? After which mind shall we live?

So let me conclude as I began. All that this university stands for, these friendships made, these halcyon days in which are so delightfully mingled the spring and zest of boyhood, with the growing sense of power that belongs to early manhood — all can avail you but little, if the chief value of them you let slip, if the abiding result of them is not found with you. That result should be a deeper

knowledge than is possible to others who have not had your advantages — a knowledge of what goes to make manhood worthy and true living possible. Your outlook on life should surely be not less sympathetic than that of other men because of these splendid opportunities that you have enjoyed. It is men the hour calls for, men who know themselves to have a mission, and who can and will turn away from all other prizes to win that one life prize; from all other siren voices to listen to that "one clear call for me."

Oh, my brothers, you come not here to *complete* your life studies, but to fit yourselves to pursue them. The study you have known here has, if it be worth anything, cost you something. The study that awaits you in the great world will surely cost you more. "Look not on your own things" — not to your own aggrandizement, nor the building of your fortune — but look on men, and you will learn to know them a little, and, as you know, to love them more. Pursue pleasure and it will pall on you. Give your soul up to toil, and

work will become some day unendurable. *But the man who gives out his best to his fellow man is never utterly cast down or disheartened.* No numbing cares can quite paralyze the reverent student of men. Falls and failures he may make; but from them all, like the fabled Antæus of old, he will rise refreshed, for he has touched his fellow. "Look not on your own things," and you will learn to love, love with a discriminating hopefulness that rises above all disappointments, and year by year discovers promise of a life that is worth living.

I have visited all the cities and all the states in this great land of ours; but from out them all, to my mind, one building stands preëminently beautiful and eloquent. It is the Memorial Hall at Harvard. It tells the story of a college generation that earnestly looked on the things of others. It tells the story of brave deeds following that persistent looking. They had their hour, those men of fifty years ago, and they heard their call. A golden haze of distance already hangs over that past time. It

seems to us very glorious, but also very simple, very easy. They could not have done other than they did. Ah, that is how problems of one age always look to the next. It did not seem so to them. Partings had to be made, prejudices met, and deep questionings answered; yet out of them all they passed triumphant. They did their duty, suffered and died, many of them, before they knew they had won. How? What mind was theirs in that momentous hour, in those desperate years of civil strife? It was the law of sacrifice, it was the mind of Christ. The cause was man's, the end his salvation; and the means, the only means, sacrifice. Man never could be, never can be, saved by any other. If you would save him, you must die for him.

Have not many of you often looked on the old war monuments, and wished with all your hearts that a duty as simple and direct as the duty of those days was yours to-day? wished that you, too, could hear a voice that called, and know it to be divine? But uncertainty surrounds you, checks you, benumbs you. It is

hard to find the truth, hard to know what to do. On sociological questions we are at sea; on theological, we are divided; on political, we sometimes fiercely differ. We often feel deeply with Matthew Arnold: —

> But now the old is out of date,
> The new is not yet born.

Brothers, as your chosen preacher, feeling the solemnity of this occasion, one that cannot recur in my life or yours again, I call on you, by all that is highest and holiest, all that in your own nature answers and echoes God, I call on you to put before you, as an end and object in your life, *the knowledge and the service of men*, — not of classmates or of partners only, but of men unlike yourself, environed differently, differently endowed. Begin to do this now, try to do it faithfully. More light and a clearer call shall be yours by and by. Look earnestly not on your own things, but on the things of others. Look on man, God's last and highest work, and in that work you will learn to see and reverence divine purpose. Give men your mind, give them your hand,

and you cannot in time withhold your heart. Know the ignorant, to teach them; know the weak, to help them; those who are out of the way, to lead them back. Oh, get to know the boys in the great cities, and share with them some of those priceless advantages that have enlarged your life. Know the wounded, to heal them, the sorrowing to comfort them. Know the sinful, to forgive and save them. Only set yourselves by the help of God to this lifelong purpose, cost what it may. Sacrifice time, self-interest, ambition, and fortune to it — set yourselves, I say, *to know men;* and you have laid the foundation for a life that cannot fail, and a hope that shall not be disappointed.

VI

JESUS' DOCTRINE OF MAN'S APPROACH TO GOD

If thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us. Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. — Mark IX, 22, 23.

For the sake of clearness, will you pardon me if I recapitulate a little in this my last address to you. I have tried to show you that the message of good news Jesus brought to men has of necessity undergone many changes since he delivered it and we in our day received it. Yet in spite of all change the vital germ of it, the all-important part of it, the seed of it, is unquestionably ours still. We need it as bread for our own souls, and as living seed which we too must sow afresh for the harvesting of those who come after us.

Our view of the world in which we live is not in many ways the view Jesus, as a Jew, held. Yet different, profoundly different though that view be, I have tried to show you that we

cannot part with Jesus, we need not part with Jesus, with his hopes, with his standards, with his doctrine of the nature of man and of God, or with his teachings as to man's place and duty in the world.

As I said, before I speak of what Jesus meant by faith, "man's way of approach to God," let me for clearness' sake restate briefly what most thoughtful Christian men would agree, I think, in believing to be man's place in the world. This world in which we live and play our brief part is God's world, created, guided, upheld, and saved by God. His life is its life. To believe this must profoundly influence our ideas as to our place in it and our duty to it. Resolutely we must lay aside as inadequate and untrue theories based on the world's independence of God and opposition to God. (This, be it remembered, the early Christians were not always successful in doing — instance the apocalyptic literature of early times.)

Unless we hold this attitude firmly, we must be prepared to find ourselves in opposi-

tion to the scientific spirit, and to much that is best in that earnest attitude of reverent research — to which our time owes so much. This modern spirit is, as I have tried to show you, "of the mind of Christ," and should be greeted as an ally and not as an opponent. Christendom as a whole is as yet far from accepting this truth; not even in theory are we always prepared to say with Jesus and with Paul, "We are fellow workers with God." They long ago saw that this was the real meaning of man's life on earth, and joy and confidence came to those much persecuted men as they declared it. But we are privileged to see as they could not, that not only were the followers of Jesus so working, but that all good men everywhere — and not men only, but the very nature of things — were working for the light and against the darkness, for God and against self-will and evil.

It may surprise you, but it is none the less true, that in our country and in our times there is a distinct reaction against these best, clearest, earliest teachings of Jesus. There is

a harking-back to the dualism of long ago; and people who loudly claim to be walking by the aid of new lights are repeating very old and very gross errors.

God, they say, is to be found *outside* ordinary physical conditions, rather than in them. With great variety and confusion of language, it is declared that only by ignoring, overcoming, and denying these, rather than by studying and accepting them, can man win his vision of God. These modern mystics cannot bring themselves to believe that the earth is the true field of man's life — as it was of the Master's life; that it is the garden in which the gardener walks and talks with God. This very old misconception of man's relation to the world has taken, in different ages, varying forms of expression. To-day, it is taking newer, but none the less mistaken and hurtful forms. The Christian Scientist denies stoutly the reality of his body. He goes a little further than his forbears of the fourth and fifth centuries, and says his real life can be won only by denying the actuality of the material life.

The material universe is to him non-existent. God is spirit, and is revealed only in the spiritual. All material things are but hindrances and illusions.

This and some other even cruder forms of mysticism are all based on the same faulty conception of God's relation to the universe and of man's place in it. The mystic religionist, the spiritual medium, the half-cheating clairvoyant, the Christian Scientist healer and expounder are but separate companies in one regiment, many hundreds of years old, one and all of them seeking an *outside* God, not the real, reasonable God, ever self-revealing in the natural order of the universe, and so in human life. They turn from the Father of spirits and of men, the God of evolution and of history, to the God who speaks in "*the sign.*"

The God and Father of Jesus is the God who owns and sustains the world. He is as much present here as in heaven. The present life is God's as truly as the unknown life beyond the grave. To deny this, to ignore it,

separates the religious faculty from the rest of man's faculties. It is an effort to live outside God's chosen environment for man, and precludes his being the one thing he is evidently called to be, here and now (whatever he may be called to be or do hereafter), an intelligent and loving fellow worker with God, *under bodily conditions*, in an actual world where he is limited by time and space.

This world, in the teachings of Jesus, is not immoral, but as yet unmoral, waiting the seed of truth; the nature of things not evil, but potentially good; the animal not opposed to the divine, but God's animal, awaiting enlightenment through the divine. Jesus is in his Father's world, and he knows it. God has always worked in it, and works in it now, and Jesus, as he lives in it, is continuing his Father's works, the works he was sent to do. His life-blood is the very life-blood of the world's life, is a part of that life, and grows as it grows. To save that world for its highest needs and purposes — for this he gladly lays down his life. Here he leads men. Here he explains

to us men our vocation, our ministry; shows us, as nobody ever did or could, man's true place in the world. All things are for man. When man comes, he comes to control, and his control is beneficent. His work is to change the beautiful, savage earth into a beautiful, fruitful world. He must everywhere play the god whether he will or not — sometimes, alas, it is a devil god he plays, but ruler he is ever. The beautiful legend of Genesis is true to the core. The world is given to man. In it he but makes good his divine title; no one will do his work for him — not even God. The seas have their work, the seasons fulfil their destiny. Forces known and unknown, operative in the world, are yet all subordinate to man, the earth's lord; he is its engineer, its director; he the controller of all its forces. And just as the wise father will leave his son unaided, often, to work out his boyish tasks, or grapple with the problems of early manhood, so God will not put an interfering hand to the great business. Appalled by its greatness, abashed by his own mistakes, the tragedies, the disasters

attending them, again and again man cries for an interfering grace; but it may not be. Is it cruel thus to leave him alone? Nay, infinite wisdom and love knows its necessity. We send our boys to school, and a hard task it is, harder for the love that sends them to endure its part of the task than for the boy so sent; but the boy's life has to be lived in its own way, and under its wisely chosen conditions. The strangeness and the loneliness of school have to be met, and in conquering these and reaping the opportunities that go with them, the lad takes his successful steps towards manhood. We are in our own small way copying the great Master all the time, and as we copy we do well. It is not cruel to leave man to his tasks alone. Infinite love and wisdom have proved that long ago, and sorrow, loss, defeat, pain, and sure death ending it all, these cannot be done away with. At view of them often we stand doubtful and discouraged. But heavenly interference we shall never have — for only thus can we win our mastery.

Let me put it simply by way of illustration.

I have a farm in Connecticut. One day, long years ago, I noticed a wild bit of land hard by. It was rough and woody, there was swamp and marshland too, a spring spread itself into a little bog; many thorns and thistles there were, with a few wild flowers among them. But a man with will to work and knowledge how to work came that way, and the swamp gave place to a spring, the tangled thicket became a woodland. Where once the roughest sort of pasturage lay, a rich field with its crop of hay and grain arose; and soon a homestead and garden were there too. This is what man can do. This is what man was sent to do. Here is a living picture of man's place in the world. The thicket was not without a beauty of its own, but the woodland was better. In the marsh there was native beauty, but the clear spring and flowery meadow were better. The farmhouse and fruitful garden meant a higher presence and a greater good. All the possibilities of fruitfulness and of beauty in home-making were there in the wild neglected tract. All they wanted was a man to call them

forth. To this work God ever calls his farmer children. To push my illustration a little further, this too makes plain the relationship of Jesus to the rest of mankind. Christ's place is inside the race, not outside it; with us in all our experiences, not outside our experiences. He explains to us our own possibilities, reveals to us our own life; has only come that we may have our own life more abundantly than we have had it before. All the coarser, earlier elements of the world are in us. In us, too, waiting for his call and leadership, are the higher, holier, humaner things waiting to be born. Even the lower in us is God's lower waiting God's higher; not the immoral man, but the unmoral man. If we will go with him, follow and obey him in working towards the higher, we are just like the farmer at what at first seemed his unthankful and hopeless task. If we insist on going back to the days of primitive man, we go back to the beasts — *and there is sin;* if we obey the spiritual, we rise to Christ — and there is the divine; but one grows out of the other in orderly process. *The*

spiritual is the evolution of the primitive. We grow as the world grows from lower to higher, from *slaveship* to *sonship*. Neglect the farm, and the fields drop back to the thicket, the spring sinks again into the marsh-land, the weed chokes the garden, the fruit trees planted with so much care go back to the crab-tree, and the lower denizens of the wild return.

Oh, is it not a reasonable work, a lovely and a free service! Let us take his view and follow him, "fellow workers with God," as Paul dared to call it long ago, carrying out his purposes to a certain and a splendid end. But, oh, mark me! There is no mere law in all this, no mere *inevitable* good, no *unsought* salvation ever won, no mere blind law ever working, but millions of free, self-determining wills; not one Christ, but many; not God doing things for us as though we were parts of a machine, but God the Father doing things by us, giving us more power, more knowledge, more light, more freedom, more responsibility, as we are fit for them. And the rule, the law,

the way by which we can alone do these things worth doing is — Faith. Here is the old, old subject. Is it a reasonable demand? Can ordinary men comply with it? Can all men exercise this working faith? Of all questions the thoughtful man is called on to face, there can, I think, be none more important than this. There are those — not a few — who tell us faith is waning. On the other hand, there are many, at least as competent to form a judgment, who confidently assert that our age is preëminently one of faith. Goethe says the ages of belief are the only fruitful ages, and history backs his opinion. If faith is slowly waning from the earth, and the most progressive peoples are learning to live without it, the fact is one of gravest significance. If, on the other hand, it is only the antiquated and infirm forms of faith (her cast-off garments) that are passing, cast aside as things no longer usable, while the real body and life of faith are quick and vital, then the time is ripe for new and simpler definitions of what our honored forbears called "saving faith."

With this last view I am very heartily in accord, and to-day I wish to insist that faith as demanded by Jesus Christ never was meant to be adhesion to any credal statement, but a vital obedience to and trust in a living man, who in his person and teaching revealed two things as they never had been revealed before — the nature of man and the nature of God.

First of all, I ask you to consider that Jesus wins from all sorts of people the response of faith that he desires. The most unpromising win their way to him and gain his approval. He expects to find good in men, to find something worth helping and saving in them, and to find this worthiness in the most unlikely places.

In order to understand what Jesus meant and what he taught about faith, we must refuse to separate his acts and his words. We must put acts and words together, and then what he does will illustrate what he says. Here, I venture to think, Christian men have very often failed.

We take a word of his — this word faith,

belief; we find that to those who have it and exercise it he constantly makes such promises as these: "All things are possible to him that believeth"; "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life"; "He that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." No words seem too strong when he seeks to express his fear for those who have it, and exercise it not: "He that believeth not shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him"; and a multitude of similar passages. We remember these passages, but we forget the circumstances in which they were spoken. Did we remember them, the circumstances would illuminate and make their meaning plain. These, however, we ignore, and the unfortunate result arises that, before we are aware of it, faith seems to become an unreal, impossible thing, a demand with which we cannot comply, a possession which but few have. Thus it fades, and the Christianity of which it is the root and spirit, fades too.

Notice, then, that from all sorts of people —the learned and the unlearned, the stranger

of a day and the lifelong friend, the disciple who clings to him, and the casual visitor who comes to him only for some one thing, and, having got it, goes away — from all alike Jesus demands faith and belief. He will have no dealings with men without it.

In word or act of Jesus we can find no precedent for the state of things which we have brought about to-day. We have made faith seem difficult; so difficult that multitudes of our very best men and women turn from the Church, because in their souls they believe it is impossible for them to yield to the demand which the Church makes on them for faith. They are just as good as the Church people from whose company they turn; as kind to their children, as faithful in their loves and friendships, as scrupulously honest in their lives, as fervent in their patriotism, as ready to serve and suffer for their fellow men. Their aims are the aims of all good men and women, and yet they are turning away sadly or indifferently from the Church and from Christ. And why are they doing it? Because we have

made his claims on them appear to be claims with which they cannot in their conscience feel it is right to comply.

This is nothing less than a perverting of the known character of Jesus, an unlawful reversal of his method and unfaithful presentation of his message. So far as we have achieved this result we have not been faithful witnesses to God for our own time and generation. I claim not only a word or a text here and there in the inspired records, but the whole lifelong conduct of Jesus, in proof of the truth of what I have said, that when he demanded faith and belief from men, he demanded something which he thought the everyday man was able to give.

Let us notice, then, that our Lord came not to create barriers between God and men, to thrust man farther from God, to call the few to their Father. His yoke was easy, his burden was light, the door of his feast stood wide open, the wanderers in waysides and hedges were welcome therein. When he sowed the seed of the kingdom, the rocky road, the

choking thorn, the barren hillside as well as the fruitful earth, liberally received the golden grain. He sought no rare possession like genius in man. No; he fastened on some common gift, the most universal, when he appealed to faith and belief. This was Jesus' fixed conviction. Every little child, he said, had faith naturally within, and could substantially exercise it. In Christ's view to demand faith is to make no unfairly difficult demand.

Nor can belief be confused with credulity. This Jesus rebukes again and again. Credulity turns the soul into an ash-heap on which are cast together all sorts of things good and bad, and all alike are wasted. Credulity is not clear-eyed, but blear-eyed. Credulity abases judgment. Credulity is a traveller without a guide, or one with a hundred guides, who is trying to follow them all in turn. He blunders round in a circle, makes no progress, and wins no goal either of character or of attainment.

Nor can faith, as Jesus demands it, be the development of ourselves at the cost of some one part of ourselves (though this fallacy has

been taught again and again), at the cost of that part of us by which we know and judge of all other things — our reason. Faith cannot be created, called out, developed, at the cost of reason; for to play off our faith against our reason is to raise a civil war in man, destructive, fratricidal, and unnatural.

I would like in passing to recall what Lord Bacon says about this: "It were better," he says, "to have no opinion at all of God than such an opinion as is unworthy of him; for the one is unbelief, the other contumely." He then goes on to illustrate: "Plutarch said well, 'I would rather a great deal men said there was no such man as Plutarch at all than that they should say there was one, Plutarch, who would eat his own children as soon as born.'" For this was what the priests of Saturn taught that Saturn did.

In the light, then, of the plain practice of Jesus as told to us in the Evangelists, I think it is evident that there were three things faith was not: not difficult or rare, not credulous, and in no way opposed to reason.

Now see how this wonderful story of the transfigured Christ coming down from the mountain to relieve his sorely confused and beset disciples, and help the father in his misery and the son in his epilepsy, illustrates what Jesus would have us believe that faith is. Notice first that here Christ confronts all that is most hopeless in life. He is face to face with life's tragedy; for here we see a father's misery, a son's insanity, a disciple's stupidity, while round the spectacle gathers the helpless, gaping crowd. A father is crying for help, such help as love needs for its loved ones. The cry is the cry of need, of need for another, for another's pain. Most of us have felt it — pain so much deeper, sharper, more unbearably bitter than any pain of our own. It is the cry of him who has tried all known methods, tested all panaceas, and won no relief. His long course of disappointment has robbed him of all faith. Expectation even is almost dead. Hear him speak for himself. "If thou canst do any thing, have pity upon us and help us." But this is not the only misery that confronts

the Lord. Here is a son's insanity, the very quintessence of earthly failure. How weary we sometimes grow of failure, weary of bearing the burden of failure which is the result of our own miscalculation or sin. But harder still is it to confront hopefully that heavy burden of failure which seems to weigh on the world from no immediate fault of its own — failure the result of some hidden deed, some forgotten sin of long ago, an hereditary taint handed down, bringing forth at last its bitter Dead Sea fruit.

But another failure confronts Jesus here, a failure more near and intimate. His chosen disciples, whose great task lies before them as yet unattempted, they who must minister to pain, they who, inspired by him, must go forth to heal earth's failures, seeking to uplift and inspire those multitudes of men whom it is so hard permanently to touch, — these men have failed in their efforts to help the boy. What promise is this for the work before them? For these men must be not only soldiers sharing the dangers of the field, but while they fight

they must bring succour. They must be invincible veterans fighting with one hand, and bearing the wounded to shelter with the other.

So we behold our Lord confronted by the human need of the father's misery, the son's insanity, and the sad incapacity of earthly ministry. What does Christ do? It is all-important that we should know. Something in all these men, he says, is put there by God, a quality which lies within them, buried and almost lost, perhaps, but still resident, responsive to meet just such occasions as these. The most real of all human need carries, Christ teaches us, the cure for its want in its own bosom. Belief lies almost dead there among those men because unused for so long. But father and disciple alike, even in the face of such difficulties, can exercise a trust so vital, so warm, so strong that not only can they stand up in it and conquer for themselves, but the influence of their own faith can work the deliverance from what seems to be a hopeless failure, and break the ties that have bound this boy in darkness from his cradle.

And what is this belief which Jesus demands and calls into exercise, which he challenges, and which immediately comes forth in obedience to his challenge? He does not enter into disquisition or definition of it. He does not even say, "Believe in me." It is just belief in God, belief that he is good, not bad; that he is near, not far; that he is loving, not indifferent; that he is all-powerful, not powerless; belief that he is the sort of God, in short, that the distracted father, the imbecile son, and the despairing disciple really want, if they will but have it so: a God who cares.

Jesus tells them that they do believe in God, that they have always believed in God, that it is human instinct to have faith in God. "Arise and exercise what is your own, and all things are possible to him that believeth." To convince them of the truth of the great power, of the possibilities of the exercise of this power within them, Jesus will give them a display of divine power. He cannot repeat such displays forever: by doing so he would make them meaningless. He will not break in

on his father's laws, — which are the best laws possible for men, — but he will more fully reveal those laws; and, therefore, he works what people call a miracle. That does not mean that he will do a supernatural deed, but he will more fully explain the natural. He will not alter by one degree any divine order, but he will give in his own person an illustration of the beauty of the order. He will show that it is God's will that misery, insanity, stupidity should cease to be, and that when men are at one with God as he is, these old oppressions of earth are powerless to resist their faithful, God-trusting will. To them, then, is entrusted a power before which the long entrenched evils of earth shrivel up and disappear.

We know that as long as this Jesus stood before men, living the life that inspired them, doing the deeds that thrilled them, using the old word faith, belief, and breathing into it absolutely new meaning, so long did faith to the apostles mean the exercise of that spiritual faculty within them that lived by the life

of Jesus. They were not believing things about him. Day by day they were drawing vigor, vision, and virtue from him. And the reason why the Gospels are so invaluable to us, and no criticisms can ever rob them of their value, lies just here — they give to us, in its simple beauty, its compelling reasonableness, and its utter comprehensiveness, this imperishable picture of the Son of man.

At the bidding of faith man stands forth transfigured and transfiguring in his power; for faith is a vast unused capacity inside all men. This is the emphasis Christ lays upon it: "All things are possible to him that believeth." "Look not," he says, "even to me for immediate deliverance, call not on some new power, seek not to ally yourself with some awe-inspiring thing. Can you believe? Believe with only a little belief, come with me and I will show you. All things are possible to him that believeth."

When Jesus stands beside us and calls on us to believe, we sometimes feel that we, too, can face all the pathos and tragedy of life as

he speaks. Why, then, have we done so little with this divine endowment? What are we doing with it? Casting it into the lumber-room of unused things, or in some pitiful way putting it into evidence, as in some homes they put the family Bible on a table by itself, where you could write with your finger on the dusty cover. This, we are told, is a day in which faith is waning, and yet we believe in many things, believe quite as much as any generation before believed, and feverishly follow the things we believe. But the faith of which Christ spoke, misdirected and misused, shrinks within us. Crowded out by mean ambition, debased, it loses its hold. Starved and untended, it seems to fail us at the supreme hour of need. We do not take time to believe in God. Perhaps we know that once we did believe in him, and we think that our belief is with us still; but some nights the wind begins to rise, and we hear the voice of the coming storm and our unused faith avails us little.

Ah, some of us have lived in havens land-

locked. Safely anchored we have been by stem and stern, and no storm test of life has been possible. We have come to believe that our portion in existence must be everlasting serenity. But no; we too must front the stress of wind and weather, and all we have been and done must be tested by the winds that blow, the floods that flow, and the rains that beat upon the houses of our lives. Friendships only built on favors accepted; deeds that look wonderful outside, but are hollow within; popular descriptions of us, with which men flatter us, or tickle our vanity while we know them to be more than half deceits — what are all of these worth? They are only wreckage before the first rockings of that storm. Yet God for every soul of man hath prepared that which, doth he but use it, will bear him to haven and safety.

I have seen an old boat lie on the shore. Well built it had been and well shaped. Its lines are fair and strong. There is its rudder; oars and sails lie wrapped beneath its thwarts. Launch into the wild sea and trust yourself

to it, and quickly it sinks with you into the salt water. Any child can tell you why. For years it has lain unused. The suns have smitten it and the frosts have cracked it. Its seams gape, its timbers part. It is fairly shaped; it was strongly built. It could once carry fifty. Now it is only a coffin for one. It has never been put to sea. It is no more help than a boat painted on canvas. In the hour of trial it fails, as all unused, unexercised things must fail. So it is with faith. Carefully, wisely, firmly within us, the quality and capacity of faith has been builded. It was meant to bear us through all storms and temptations to a fairer, farther shore; but laid away, forgotten, unused, it moulders, shrinks, and dries up beyond recovery.

But let us turn and look more deeply into the nature of faith, see how it comes to be, and why its exercise is so vital to us. You judge of a tree by its fruits, not by its leaf or even by its flower. You judge of any course of events by its results; a theory, too, a doctrine, a philosophy — nay more, any govern-

ment or institution. They must all submit to the same test. By that they stand or fall. Not only is there no fairer test, but *there is no other test.* This, you say, is sound theory. Nay, you say it is more than theory — it is well-ascertained fact; for though we may often deny and forget it, the nature of things around us never forgets it.

Nature has been working on this line for ages untold. She accepts and preserves as her instruments only things that successfully endure this final test. She has a vast work to do, carries on innumerable manufactories under inconceivably numerous conditions. She tries all sorts of tools in her vast workshop, and ever and always casts aside all tools that break or fail. In the process she piles up heaps of failures, but the things she finally arrives at — the good things, the useful things, beautiful and fitted things — these all have stood the test successfully. They are not only good, but they keep on improving. In this consists their vital goodness. They are all the time being tested by competition.

How we hated, as boys, our first competitive examinations. How well we remember the long breath we drew when we were through the last of them. And yet, when we left the examination room, as we thought forever, we were only entering the larger examination hall of life. When we left the competition of the book, study, and paper, we were entering on a fiercer test of competition still. For competition rules everywhere: in the air and sky, — yes, far aloft in the ether, — in the dark earth beneath our feet, in the sunless gulfs of the sea. Every blade of grass, every ear of corn holds its own by competition. The multitudinous things that crawl, that live, that walk, that swim, that fly — they are all of them, little as we notice it, holding their own painfully, in circumstances of fierce struggle. And so it is that from her vast competition halls nature brings forth not only the good but the best. Only the best survive, because she admits no favoritism in her vast household. Her system is absolutely fair. She scorns all suggestions of "pull." She loves the strong,

the fair, the good, and these at their strongest, fairest, and best. All lesser goods and fairs and strongs are ever making way, under her order, for her best, her fairest, and her strongest.

When we denounce competition we denounce a divinely ordained process for weeding out the imperfect. Nay, further, we denounce the only conceivable process by which sorrow, pain, imperfection, and at last death itself, can be done away. Let us gird up the loins of our minds, face facts, and cease crying for the moon. By competition we are what we are; by competition our children shall be, please God, better than we. God's great competitive examination board is ever in session, and through it our nation has been lately passing, as you well know.

The point I want to make is this: This faith which Jesus demands of us is a common possession. It is a religious instinct which even a child possesses; it is acquired by us all as all other valuable qualities are, as the result of a system of competition. The knowledge

of these later times has bidden us hold what is old with new reverence. The very fact that it is old carries to the thoughtful mind proof of its vitality. Its age is the medal on its breast, telling of the many victories it has won, the struggles in which it has conquered things of lesser good than itself. So we value what is old, and we call it beautiful, for we know it is the result of actual worth, that no favoritism of nature has saved it for us. And this truth teaches us a new respect for the good things around us and within us. They are not only ancient; they are costly, they are approved, they have won their right to use and a hearing. And the greatest, the most lasting, the most universal of these is *faith*.

But there is a further reason for valuing faith, another proof of its importance. It is not sufficient in God's economy that things should be old; they must also be adaptable, for no quality or possession, however venerable, that lacks this capacity for adaptation can live on; or, to go back to what I have said, can keep improving, can keep on holding its own in

the competitive examinations of God. *And therefore the proof of the vitality of faith is the measure and magnitude of its adaptability.* Adaptability, in this sense, comes to be a greater sign of vitality than age. And this adaptability is the preëminent quality of faith. When man's condition was low, his faith was base-born. It clothed itself in base forms. When his moral ideas were undeveloped he clothed his ideas of God with his own imperfections. When he was cruel, so was his God; lustful, so was his God; jealous and full of hatred to his enemies, his God was a God of battles and a jealous God. The reason thoughtless people to-day find fault with the Bible is because the presentations of God which its pages bring to us do not agree with our present conceptions of God. If the Bible were not full of misconceptions, or old and imperfect conceptions, it could not in any sense be the Bible at all. It could not be a true history of man's reaching out in earlier times toward God. In centuries much later than those whose record we have in the Bible, you can

note the same process. From Pagan to Puritan you follow the idea of God, and God is chiefly a lawgiver, his chief seat the judgment seat, his title the Lord of Hosts.

But our faith calls, yearns for something higher, for a God higher than the lawgiving God and the ruling God. Yes, for One whose infinite tenderness and mercy can, as the old hymn puts it, —

> Make the dying bed
> Feel soft as downy pillows are.

So in the Bible and, since the Bible was written, still on in human history, faith gathers up all the broken lights that have come from God, all the thoughts which men have in their best hours worthily formed of him; gathers them from the artist yearning for his beauty; from the poet divining his meaning; from the philosopher thirsting for his truth; yes, from misunderstood heresiarch, reformer, and martyr. From all religions and all histories, faith gathers them up, and sees in the teachings of Jesus the explanation and vindication of them all. Old and new, changing

because it lives, who can fix for it a birth-date? Who can set any boundary for its advancing tide? *Man's hunger for and appreciation of God,* — so the Son of man explains to us the universal instinct. We are not inventing an explanation of faith. We are face to face with its actuality. *This faith of ours is as much an evolution as our eyes are, as our hands are;* and to-day with us it is not the rudimentary thing it once was, just as our eyes are not the rudimentary things they were once, or our hands the rudimentary things the monkeys once had. Eyes and hands and faith have all been developed by ages of painful use.

But I hear some one object, and the objection seems at first both reasonable and weighty: What proof have you that this faith — the result of evolution, possessing wonderful powers of adaptation — has not, like many other old things, fulfilled its purpose, become no longer useful? Let us consider this a moment. There are things within us that are old, and have no doubt in the past been adaptable,

but, so far as we can see, are useful no longer. What distinguishes them? They are like links connecting us to the brutishness of the past. They are marks of a lower order. The scientists call them *vestigiæ*, for they are carried around by the living body, but are not fulfilling a living function; are not vitally important to any part of our lives. The proof that we can do without them is that we do not use them at all, or use them less and less.

Now faith, I hold, is not one of these. What is best and highest and most seemly in our lives is ever dependent on the exercise of the religious instinct. It would not be hard to prove that in every department of progress man fortifies and inspires himself by the use of this part of himself — the inspirational impulse toward the best of which he is cognizant. Scientific progress and scientific men are commonly supposed to have little to do with faith (a supposition which, by the way, I think is false), but to-day faith has modified the whole aspect of science. Contrast the greatest scientists the past has produced with the pre-

sent scientific men. Consider the wisdom of Egypt confronting the baffling mysteries of the universe. Hear the spirit of the past speak in the motto of the Temple of Isis: "I am whatever hath been, is, or ever will be, and my veil hath no man yet lifted." Now hear the later voice: "Veil after veil have we lifted, and her face grows more beautiful, august, and wonderful, with every barrier withdrawn."

But let us contrast religion where faith dwells and the religion where mere resignation takes the place of the hope and inspiration that rightly belongs to faith. For let us not forget this: Faith is never mere acceptance; it is the appreciation of God that yearns and strives and grows from good to better and from pure to purer. It is the religious instinct in exercise.

In reading an interesting book lately, the tale of a strange life lived in the Far East,—Colonel Gardiner's "Memoirs,"—I came on this story. Gardiner was staying with a mountain chieftain who held sway over a lonely valley on the borders of Thibet. This valley

and all its inhabitants were threatened by the ruthless incursion of a more powerful chieftain, of whom all the people lived in dread. Gardiner's host set himself to procure a present which, when presented to the tyrant, would save his people from rapine. An old fakir lived in a cave at the mouth of the valley. For years the old man had lived only to pray and to share his scanty provision with travellers poorer than himself. He possessed, however, an extraordinary ruby, which had come to him by direct descent, a family heirloom from the time of the great Timour. Gardiner describes their visit to the old man. They found him immersed in contemplation, and the chief told the cause of their visit, the threatened invasion, the certain ruin to all his people, and begged that, in the hope of propitiating the tyrant, the old man would give to him his one treasure. He listened, said Gardiner, and then he arose, went to a corner of the hut and unwound the jewel (which, by the way, was as safe in his keeping as though it had been in the Bank of England, for no

one in that country would touch the dwelling of the fakir), unwound the jewel from a bit of rag, and put it in his visitor's hands, saying, "I hope the gift may have the result you expect." Large money was offered, but this the old man would not take. "But you may, if you will," he said, "give me a larger allowance of corn, for many hungry people pass this way." Then he asked to be left alone, and composed himself to prayer again. Here in this lonely, distant, unknown land, where no Anglo-Saxon had ever come before, was holiness of a pure type, unworldliness complete in its renunciation, charity as unselfish as that of the Son of man himself. Yet numberless such men have for long centuries sat in their caves or huts, looking over the fair plains and valleys of those cruel lands. Alas, their holiness has not availed in those regions to advance by an inch, so far as we can see, the cause of life, humanity, and truth. Lust and cruelty reign supreme. Regions once prosperous and happy are desert and soaked in blood. Man still remains as he has been for centuries,

a ravening wild beast. And why? Because the progressive power of religion lives in faith alone, and not in mere unworldliness. No renunciation, no unselfish charity, no piety, nor all these combined, however splendid they are, can, when faith has fled from them, permanently uplift mankind.

There is no such thing as heredity in goodness. Men are like tops often. The top spins a long time after the string that spun it is withdrawn, but in time it totters to a fall. So hereditary goodness stored up will uphold individuals, will for a time even sustain society; but take faith away, and though courage still upholds the brave, and fortitude still supports the strong of heart, the skies have become gray over the pilgrim masses of men, their marching lines have become broken, and no sweet singing cheers the march, no heavenly allies help them on their way. Such pilgrims will not keep on marching forever, such soldiers will soon cease to fight; for even Mr. Greatheart is himself a pilgrim, without hope of a celestial city; and Galahad a knight-errant,

who dares no longer hope for a glimpse of the white light of the Holy Grail.

But let us see how the Church has dealt with faith. First, let us remember it is not the policy of the Lord himself to destroy old conceptions that are part of man's growing. He replaces them slowly with better ones. And so his new gospel, as it clashed with time-honored beliefs, must merge and mingle with them. Mankind's whole previous conception of God was as unlike Jesus Christ as it well could be. When the bodily vision of him passed, the great doctors and saints of the time soon began to create from his teachings, as they understood them, systems of religion crude in form and profession, differing radically from Christ's gospel. It could not be otherwise. Man's dominating idea of God has been the God of force. Sheer almightiness was exalted, — man bidden to bow, — but sheer almightiness has no sweet reasonableness. It may command and threaten, but it ever remains a sort of militant rule of life, a martial law for conscience; the rigorous control during a crisis,

not the normal condition of a peaceful and progressive life. But since the mere almighty idea of God of necessity died slowly, ere it passed there grew from it a whole series of conceptions of a punishing and damning God. Men bowed to religious laws as they bowed to national laws. The world owed much to the iron law of rule, and in the Church, in lesser scale, came naturally to be reproduced a similar condition. It seemed reasonable for men to demand, in the name of God, obedience, acceptance of certain definite things. They made pictures of Jesus that were often veriest caricatures. They baked their truths into hard-and-fast shape. Things that *appeared* to be true about Jesus, men were told they must believe; and faith came to be a demand, enforced by threat, and not the exercise of an instinct.

The movement was inevitable. I have referred to it before. It was the highest sort of religious movement that the time was capable of, but none the less it replaced Christ's idea of faith with a lesser idea. It practically said that faith was not merely the exercise of the

religious instinct addressed to its Lord, but the enforced belief in a complex system of things. I have dwelt on this devolution of Christianity just to show that it was a growth in the opposite direction to Christ's teaching. As I have said, it had to be. The world of that day was not capable of evolving or accepting anything higher. But the truth put in hard-and-fast shape, or in a word, dogmas, cannot produce the highest form of Christ's likeness. Dogmas are poor food for the soul. The Great Physician knew best, and seeing far into the future as he did, and knowing what must be the deepest needs of the present, as well as of future times, he never once made a demand on any soul for this lower sort of faith. Well he knew that belief in the mere almightiness of God only tends to make strong natures diabolic; that repression incites rebellion. And so, in not one single authentic incident did he so represent his Father or make claim for himself. Recall one instant, if you can, where faith, as Jesus demanded it, meant believing in things. Always and ever, rather,

did faith with him mean belief in the sort of God that "I reveal to you"; "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

So much for Christ's demand. How about the apostles' demand for faith. What did they mean, for example, by faith as a prerequisite to baptism? What was baptism? Was it more than a common rite to which was given a new significance, an open confession in the sight of men of obedience to Jesus, a declaration that he was the Son of God; that his cause was the one to fight for; his society the divine and final society? Those who would be his followers must be baptized. What was the form of baptism? We know that baptism at first was not administered in any other form but the name of Jesus. The very early Christians were not even baptized in the name of the Trinity. This was a later form. Belief in Jesus was the one thing demanded, and that without any disquisition on the nature of God at all.

There is not one single line in all St. Paul's thirteen letters to lead us to suppose that he

laid any stress, with the multitude of his converts, on mysterious questions of religious truth; whether, for instance, Jesus was the son of Mary alone, or the son of Mary and Joseph. The subject does not come up with St. Paul. Nor is there one line to lead us to suppose he formulated for his converts any doctrine of the Trinity. Rather, Paul said, as his Master had said before him, "Jesus stands before you —do you admire him, can you love him, can you find it in your hearts to obey him? I speak to you as the apostle, the messenger to a despairing world of the visible God in humanity. Here at last is rest, pardon, and hope for men."

But this is not what men are asked to do to-day. They are confronted with, or think they are confronted with, certain churchly demands. They must stand up to say a creed, and they are told that that creed is not simply a symbol of their faith, but an accurate definition of things which they believe to be utterly beyond human defining. Or, second, they must submit to the rite of baptism. But

baptism does not seem to them to be quite what the old rite was. Once it meant danger braved, and now, too often, they see it degraded till it is merely a fashionable function. And the third demand is that they should kneel at the communion table, where again "believing things" confronts them. They have some dim idea of what it meant to kneel with the Lord of long ago, when the multitude clamored for him and were plotting his death; to kneel around the altars of the early Church when heathen Rome thundered and the Arena reeked of blood. But what does this mean to-day? They are told it expresses a sorrow for sin which they cannot always honestly call forth.

I might go further, but time forbids me. Here these three simple acts, these demands of the Church, are each and all of them made to rest on a false idea of faith. They are not made the expression of personal obedience and reverence for Jesus. They have been perverted from that. And can we not see that the natural man, the inferior man, *often likes this*

system of perversion, that he will readily comply with these things? Cannot any one see that he does this because he is a lesser man? The more scrupulous men, however, — the men built to a higher order, whose religion does not mean a bargaining with God, but an effort to follow God in honesty of soul, — these greater, larger men cannot accept such conditions, but ever draw back from them. They do so, not captiously, but in order that they may safeguard the very eye of the soul, the religious instinct itself. A faith *in things* suits the natural man, alas, too well. He is ever its defender. But it leaves uncomforted and unblest men of larger mould.

So, based on this misapprehension of the meaning of faith, there has grown up a false idea of the Church. From the Church men turn away, for she seems to come to them with intolerable demands. She makes them suspect God, not love him. She seems an exacting Church, not a giving and freeing Church, as of old she came in beauty and might to men. The best and most scrupulous men hold

back from her too often, doubtful of that to which they are asked to commit themselves. Could they but realize that religious faith is only a striving after obedience to Jesus, the simple, great Jesus Christ of the Gospels; seeking to do what he would have us do to make earth more fit for his divine rule, slowly to lift life's laws into harmony with love's law! Let the Church demand these things of men, and again will men listen to her, and again will she lead them on in the path of a high resolve. And though they stagger, painfully at times, yet will they follow her, for following her will then be following the Son of man.

Faith, then, as Jesus and also his apostles demanded its exercise, was not believing things that were hard to believe. It was using a divinely implanted instinct, a power and a faculty within us that answers to the presentation of the living, loving God made visible in Jesus Christ. When this faith has failed to fasten its grasp on him, again and again it has created for itself distorted images, again and again it

has found itself disastrously following wandering fires; but still it ever contains within itself power to turn to the true vision and bow before the supreme beauty, perceiving the beautiful to be beautiful and the good to be good, and, therefore, sent from God. From this the Christian Church started, and to this the Christian Church must return. This is the real Church. This is the real Christianity. This is the Christianity that shook the old world and lifted it out of its despair. This is the Christianity that can breathe peace into the deep unrestfulness of our times. It shows no defect of nature to refuse to believe in old things just because they are old. Tradition, however venerable and weighty, may be rooted in utter error. It has often been proved to be so rooted. To find one's self, therefore, incapable of accepting truths accredited by most venerable tradition shows no defect of nature. I repeat; to refuse to *believe things* is no sin; but to refuse Jesus the faith he demands — ah, what shall we say of that?

We are told men take a mass of precious

stuff, and, subjecting it to intolerable heat, expect at last to see glowing in its centre one tiny, blood-red drop — the ruby. So in Jesus there is for man the declaration of his own preciousness. The ages of human struggle have not been in vain. The chaos that often seemed to engulf man's life was only the prelude to God's cosmos. All the pains and all the struggles and all the hopes of the mothers and fathers of the world were justified when at last, as the result of all the intolerable heat and pain of living, there came forth One utterly beautiful, completely good, and men bowed before him and cried, "Behold the Son of God."

More than once before on earth had burst forth that ecstatic cry. But when at last his own lips speak, we hear him say, "*The Son of man.*" To fail to see in him a present beauty, a visible loveliness; to fail to hear and own the sway and inspiration of his heavenly music — this, indeed, is to argue defect and limitation; for such failure means, in part at least, a moral death.

Press faith on men, emphasize it as believing things, and you have but erected thorny hedges around the cross of the Christ through which men must peep, over which, wounded, they must strain, and after all only see partial views and catch distorted outlines of him whom you would place within. This has been done again and again; done with the best intention, done by those possessed of a passionate love for him whom they would protect. But the human hedges, whether erected by friends or foes, with spiny barrier forbid the child-faith he so loved to come near him.

I would not be misunderstood. Creeds are necessary, dogmas in their place essential. I have said nothing to decry them. Many dogmas and doctrines have been slowly evolved, and are the result of much pain, of long and reverent study, and show a profound insight into human needs and divine revelation. Thus thoughtfully, reverently, let us receive *these partial* statements of eternal truth, till the Master open our minds for better and higher things still. Thoughtful men will readily admit

that we must have creed in every active relation of life. The merchant has a creed in his office; the scientist one in his laboratory; the bricklayer and builder one at his fingers' ends; and the soldier who charges and dies does so because he accepts and obeys the soldier's creed. The creed is a certain accepted thing on which I, as a man, base my action. The creed is a working necessity at all times. In every department of life, as much as in the religious department, "no creed" means paralysis.

And still further, I must hold my creed with other men, and make it a basis of working with other men. The individualist simply argues himself a fool when he says: "I must unite with other men to make money, unite to get learning, unite to produce any valuable earthly work, or unite to defend anything that is worth defending. But when it comes to a question of doing good and developing my own character, let me alone. Here I will be my own guide. Here no man shall dictate to me, aid me, or judge me." He may be perfectly

intelligent, may have thought intelligently along other lines, but along the spiritual line he is not a thinker: he is talking foolishly.

But what to-day is most important to emphasize surely is this: all these doctrines, dogmas, and creeds, however necessary they may be, are but crutches and walking-sticks, not hands and feet. They are but a temporary expression of the eternal verity, and as they change and pass, by their very change are evidencing the might of the living truth which, because it is the *everlasting seed*, can ever, must ever, reclothe itself in a series of new and beautiful bodies, thus protecting its life.

Shortly before he died Tennyson said, "My most passionate desire is to obtain a clearer and fuller view of God." So spoke and still speak the great of the earth. For man cannot live by bread alone. And if we have learned in our heart of hearts to want Jesus, nay, if we have never heard his name and yet have sought the things he strove for, then some glorious day he will surely open our eyes to see the things we cannot see now. The way

shall be open for us, and the lame man shall leap as the hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing. The little lame boy needs his crutch as he limps beside his father; but when they both of them come to the stream-side, his father takes him in his arms and he needs his crutches no more.

Let me beg, then, your careful consideration for the meaning of faith. I insist on it as of vital importance to-day. Oh, let us search our hearts so that we may keep alive and in health this divinely appreciative part of us. Are we making provision for this part of our life itself? It is ever the eye of the soul; and all the spicery of all the Indies, all the glut of all the seas cannot take its place, cannot satisfy the soul from which faith is departing.

Be you inside the Church or outside the Church, I charge you, then, make provision for this faith that is in you, this religious faculty God has given you, which you hold by virtue of the painful struggles of the past, and for the handing down of which to your children you will be held accountable by God.

Keep the religious instinct alight. Keep single this divine part. For in each soul of man it is the little window opening to the Everlasting Day. It is because this wonderful religious instinct and aspiration within us links us to God that faith, and faith only, can transform. By faith's use it is absolutely true that we are transformed men. Faith softens us, widens us, deepens our sympathy. It breathes a peace over all life. Why, take it in the lower sphere. You trust a friend of great resources — you who are poor and friendless and burdened with a load you cannot carry. You go to your friend, you lay your case before him. He meets you with kindly hand and eye, and before you know it your burden is rolling from your shoulders, and you go away from his house or his office with lighter tread and hope reborn. Or you trust in some one you love — your friend, your child — and in the strength of that trust, no matter how fierce the sun or how cruel the cold and frost, you find warmth and shelter. What accomplishes the wonder? It is just faith; faith in what is highest and

best in those you know down here. And so you go forth to life's inevitable struggles with a gentler heart. Faith justifies all it does and sees here by what it believes in beyond. Faith is intuition triumphing over appearances, "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Put trust in God, the Good over all, the Worker in all, the Power behind all, and at last the Judge of all — not the outside and distant God, but the immanent and inside God, moving through all men. When we reach this point, my friends, we hear an echo of divine harmony, and we know the beginnings of a holy peace.

> We know in part — how, then, can we
> Make plain each heavenly mystery?
> Yet still the Almighty understands
> Our human hearts, our human hands,
> And, overarching all our creeds,
> Gives his wide presence to our needs.

And now I turn specially to you young men and women who to-day go forth from this great university into the larger life beyond. Oh, still it is true, true to-day as it was eighteen hundred years ago — "all things are pos-

sible to him that believeth." Believe in your friends, believe in your country, in your institutions, in yourself, in your God. Believe in your dreams, your best and highest and holiest dreams. Many things you may have to give up, but never surrender these. Use the belief you have, and it will surely grow to more.

Especially, and above all, fix and concentrate your belief on Jesus, on the value of the things he declared valuable; on the sort of God he believed in, a God like himself. You are ever choosing things to believe in. You can and do "will to believe." Will to believe in him, and in his Father God. His person and his message have been presented to humanity as a supernatural revelation that demands man's reverend obedience because of this very supernaturalness. I have tried to commend his gospel to you on far other grounds.

Neither in the personality of Jesus nor yet in his teachings is there any break in the order of the world, which he declared to be a divine order. He was a Jew; he inherited Jewish

teaching and tradition, a teaching and tradition that gave to our sorrowing world the only God it can ever worship, a God who *cares*.

We can all love the beautiful, we can all praise the strong, but in humanity there is much that is sordid and mean and small and of little account, and a real God must be the God over all, loving all, caring for all, responsible for all. Humanity, in the mass, can never and never will worship any God whose tender mercies are not over *all* his works.

Such a God Jesus brought to men. Art never dreamed of such a God till after Jesus died. Science knows him not to-day. Science has never found him. Some day it may find him, but not now. But the hungry heart of man is a wonderful thing. It dreams great dreams, ever and anon it sees high visions.

Jesus will yet rule the world because he embodies the beliefs and hopes of the world. He is the product of our order. *His doctrines are but the setting forth of the long-cherished instincts of men.* He is our King because he is one of ourselves; no miraculous visitor from

another world, but a man, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh. *In him the hopes and prayers and beliefs of the dumb millions at last take voice.*

We Christians believe, since the Incarnation of Jesus, since to us was born a man full of the Holy Ghost, a brighter light, a clearer vision of God has been given men. Those who try to follow him, who take him as a master, and seek to do the deeds he would have them do, have light given them to live and hope and work by. They need no oracular authority. He appointed none. At the same time they refuse to cut themselves off from the religious world of the past. He did so refuse. He knew he was what he was because of it; slowly we are realizing this too. In the heart of man, long before Jesus' day, was born the beginning of the great gospel, *God's nature present in human life.* This is the supreme miracle, if you will. Man's life ever moving upward to greater, higher ends, by process of natural law, by exercise of instinctive vision, or, to use old words, by inspiration of the

Holy Ghost. This is the gospel of good news to men, gloriously reasonable, yet surpassing all reason. And he who brought it long ago, still in beauty and holiness and power to help, stands alone. He transcends all teachers. He still inspires and sustains the hopes of men.

THE END

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